

The Norns Judgment

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/5315903) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/5315903>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Major Character Death
Category:	F/M , M/M
Fandom:	The Avengers (Marvel Movies) , Thor (Movies) , Captain America (Movies)
Relationship:	Loki/Steve Rogers , Jane Foster/Thor
Character:	Loki (Marvel) , Steve Rogers , Thor (Marvel) , Odin (Marvel) , Natasha Romanov , Sam Wilson (Marvel) , Vision (Marvel) , Norns (Marvel) , James "Bucky" Barnes , Jane Foster (Marvel) , Erik Selvig , Clint Barton , James "Rhodey" Rhodes , Sif (Marvel) , Warriors Three , Heimdall (Marvel) , Tyr (Marvel) , Hel Hela
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Post-Avengers: Age of Ultron (Movie) , References to Norse Religion & Lore , Loki Angst , Loki Has Issues , Depressed Loki , Enemies to Friends to Lovers , Loki Redemption , Odin's Bad Parenting , Mad Odin , Thor Is a Good Bro , Norns Intervine , Bucky Barnes Recovering , Steve Feels , Steve Has Issues , Depressed Steve , Healing Talks , Temporary Character Death , Anal Sex , Clint Has Issues , Angst with a Happy Ending , Slow Burn
Stats:	Published: 2015-12-01 Completed: 2015-12-26 Chapters: 26/26 Words: 32880

The Norns Judgment

by [Lizphills500](#)

Summary

Loki is rescued from execution by the Norns. While they deem that his actions on the dark world has redeemed him of his crimes on Asgard and Jotunheim, he must still pay for the damage on Earth.

They sentence him to live as a human while still keeping his magic. He has one year to earn his redemption or be striped of that as well. If he succeeds, he may to return to Asgard in glory.

Of course, along the way he has help in the shape of Captain America.

Notes

Ok, in this story, I've played around with Norse Lore as well as the powers of the Mind Stone. It is not 100% accurate nor is it meant to be.

I've included little bits I picked up from the Trailer from Captain America - Civil War for hints (which was Amazing. Can't wait till May)

There is a lot of hurt for several characters on this Story but I am a sucker for Happy endings.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Loki was sitting alone in his cell once more. The Allfather had ordered that his chains remain on and his power restricted at all times. There were also two guards posted outside. Loki could see them through the shimmering gold walls.

It had been 3 days since Thor returned from Midgard. 3 days he had been waiting in this cell for Odin to decide his fate. He was sure that it would not end well for him and in a way, he was glad.

Loki had only taken the Throne so Thor wouldn't have to. When Odin fell into the Odinsleep, he knew that Thor would have to become King, something he didn't want and Loki felt his brother deserved some peace, something he felt he owed his brother. Of course, it wasn't completely selfless. Loki couldn't help but feel satisfaction at sitting on Odin's Throne again, proving if only to himself that he could have been a good king.

Loki had Heimdall keep him informed on the events on Earth, still believing him to be Odin. Loki should have been able to use Gungir to follow Thor's adventures, but the powers of the Staff didn't answer him, as if it knew that they were not his to wield by right.

Heimdall had been looking at him oddly of late, especially when he had ordered the gatekeeper not to answer Thor's requests for aid. Loki was starting to worry that Heimdall may be beginning to suspect that something was wrong. So Loki had begun making plans to escape. Odin was still locked in Loki's old chamber, but he wouldn't stay like that forever. Loki had done all he could for Thor, giving him as much time as he was able on Midgard with Jane Foster. Loki knew that when he awoke, the Allfather would demand Thor's return.

Thor, of course had returned much sooner than Loki had anticipated. When he entered the throne room to greet his Father, Gungir almost sprang to life and caused Loki's glamour to change to his normal form. Both brothers stared at each other in shock.

Thor recovered first. He charged at Loki, knocking him to the ground. Thor stood over his brother, Mjolnir raised to strike. Loki closed his eyes, readying himself for the blow. It never came. He heard a clang as the hammer hit the floor and felt himself pulled into Thor's arms.

"Loki, how are you alive? You died in my arms." Thor stammered, tears of joy running down his face.

Loki laughed sadly, clinging on to Thor as if his life depended on it. "It takes more than that thing to kill me. I needed to die so Odin wouldn't look for me. I am sorry it hurt you but I saw no other way."

Thor looked hard for a moment. "Where is father? Is he.....?"

"No. He is in my chambers, in the Odinsleep." Loki said quickly. His only hope now lay with Thor good graces.

"No longer, Jotun. You are ever the liar." Odin's voice boomed behind them. He was standing in the doorway and he looked enraged. "Guards, take that thing to the dungeons and keep it chained."

Loki could have escaped. His magic was powerful enough to get him far away from the palace, but he was tired. Tired of hiding, running and fighting. He just wanted it to end one way or another. So he let the guards drag him from Thor's embrace. He barely heard Thor's voice as he screamed at his Father to show mercy. It meant nothing to him, he just want this all to end.

"Father, without Loki's help, I could never have defeated the Dark Elves. He gave his life to save both me and Jane." Thor said to Odin, desperate to use every argument to aid his Brother.

Odin looked down at Thor from his throne. "For one making such a noble sacrifice, he looks remarkably alive. He tricked you, Thor just as he has 100 times before and will do again if we let him live. You have always been far too trusting when it came to him. He had committed crimes greater than any that has lived and deserves the harshest of punishments."

"No father. I will not let you kill my brother." Thor shouted.

"He is not your brother. He was a tool which was unfit for purpose. He has caused death and destruction across the nine realms and I will have vengeance." Odin shouted back.

Heimdall had been stood at the back of the room, watching the exchange. "My King, killing Loki will not bring the Queen back from Valhalla."

Odin turned on the gatekeeper, his eye burning with anger and hurt. "How dare you. You are just a guilty as the Jotun and this foolish son of mine. You only have your place because Loki forgave you in my name and I will not have the people know that they were ruled over by a Frost Giant, but know this. I will watch you closely. Defy me once more and your next charge will be a cell."

Thor was shocked at Odin outburst and it served to strengthen his resolve. "Father, I warn you. You will swear that Loki will not be harmed or I will release him from the dungeons myself."

"You would not dare stand against me, not over a Jotun runt. He has killed, Thor, on Jotunheim and on your precious Earth. All that and you think he is worth saving?"

"He is my Brother." Thor replied simply, but firmly.

Odin stood for a moment. A darkness fell over him. "It would seem to me that you have once again committed treason against Asgard. You released a commended prisoner from his cell and allowed him to rule Asgard. So I sentence you. Banishment."

Mjolnir fell to the floor at Thor's feet and his remaining amour melted away. Still he looked every inch a true King. "Father, do not do this. This is not what mother would have wanted."

Odin growled but choose to ignore Thor last comment. "Thor, you will beg for my forgiveness before you will be permitted to return. Guards, take him to the Bifrost. Heimdall, do your duty."

Thor fought his captures with little success and was dragged from the throne room. Heimdall stayed for a moment watching the insane King. Odin walked down the steps to where Mjolnir rested. He reached down to pick it up, but found it wouldn't move. It would seem that while he could remove the power from Thor, Odin had descended so far into his madness, he was himself unworthy to wield the hammer.

This was a dark day for Asgard and Heimdall couldn't help, but think as he turned away to send Thor to Midgard, that maybe they had been better off when Loki was on the Throne.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Loki is sentenced

Loki knew it would happen. He had always known that if he caught again, there would be no mercy. There would be no help from anyone from his former life. Only Fandral had been to see him, sneaking into the dungeons late the previous night (the guards were friends and hadn't given him away). He had told Loki what Thor had said and what Odin had done. Loki listened in silence, never saying a word.

Loki felt as if his heart was a stone, hard and cold. He couldn't bring himself to feel sorrow or guilt for Thor even when he knew he should. All he cared about was the end to hisretched life, an end to his pain, his suffering. Odin would grant him that one mercy, all the while not knowing he was doing it. That was the only real emotion that Loki could feel, satisfaction that Odin was fulfilling his final wish.

The guards came for him. He was chained already by the wrists, but now they added chains to his ankles and neck. He didn't fight them, he stood quiet, allowing them to add whatever extra metal they needed to feel safe.

They led him from the cell and through the Palace. Everyone they passed stopped and looked at him. There a look in their eyes, some of anger and some of pity. They all knew what was to come, what fate was waiting for Loki and they all could see that Loki welcomed it.

The throne room was full to bursting. That had been the reason for the delay. Odin had summoned nobles from all the realms (barring Midgard and Jotunheim) to see Asgard justice done, to see the fate of those who stand against the might of the Allfather.

Odin was sitting alone, his face set hard with hate. As Loki was brought to the steps, Odin rose.

"Loki Son of Laufey, you are charged with committed murder on a scale never seen in the nine realms before." Odin began. "You have killed in Jotunheim and Midgard and have exposed the rest of the nine realms to war and suffering as a result of the destruction of the Bifrost."

Loki knew he should stay silent, but he also knew that whatever happened, nothing could change his fate. it would be his last chance to have his say and he wouldn't go out with whisper. "This coming from Odin the Warmonger. How many Jotun did you kill before they were beaten enough for you? Then you kidnap a child and change him to suit your needs. And from what I'm told you were prepared to let every Aesir to die, to satisfy your lust for the death. What makes you so different from me, Allfather? At least I know the monster I am. Do you? Did she know what you are?"

Odin growled. "You do not mention her. If not for you, Frigga would still be alive."

"How am I to blame for Mother's death? I was locked in call. I could have saved her."

Odin rushed down the steps and with one hand knocked Loki to the ground. He stood over him,

fire burning in his remaining eye. “You started all of this. You with your thrust for power, for the throne, to prove you were better than Thor. Your actions resulted in Thor being banished to Midgard. He would never have met that woman, would never have brought her to Asgard. The Dark Elves would never have come here. YOU KILLED MY WIFE.”

The throne room might as well have been empty, no one dare make a sound. Loki couldn't help but grin to himself.

“Now they see. He is insane beyond reason and they all know.” He thought. Out loud he said “If not for his action and mine, this universe would now be in darkness. You failed Allfather. You failed her and Asgard.”

Odin hand twitched as if he wanted to strike Loki again, but didn't. “You will struggle to use your silver tongue, Jotun, without your head. I sentence you for your crimes against the Nine Realms to death. I hope Hel has a warm welcome for you in the lowest reaches of Helheim.”

There was a gasp around the room. No one in living memory can remember a prisoner being given a death sentence. Few could think of a time when it done in Borr's rule. Everyone knew that Odin had threatened it when Loki was brought back from Midgard, but had thought that Frigga intervention had been an excuse for Odin to show leniency. Loki knew better. He knew it then and he knew it now. Odin had wanted him dead since his return and this was his chance.

The doors of the Throne room opened and Tyr entered in full armour, carrying a huge sword. He had been prepared. Even though he welcomed it, Loki still paled at the sight of the old warrior who was clearly there to carry out the sentence. He should have known Odin wouldn't have dirtied his hands by doing the deed himself. He rose back up to his knees. He would have rather face his death on his feet but beheading didn't make that possible so he would rise as high as possible.

Tyr stopped before the stepped and dropped into a salute. Odin had regained his composure and returned to the throne. “Let Justice be done. End this Tyr.”

Tyr got back to his feet and moved behind the condemned. Loki kept his eyes on Odin until the last second, even as a hand on his back pushed him forward until his nose nearly touched the floor. Loki closed he eyes and cleared his mind, preparing himself for the end. He heard the sound of Tyr's armour grind together as he raise the sword and the swish through the air as it swung down. Only it never fell.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

The Norns intervene and judge both Loki and Odin

Loki stayed on his knees for several minutes before it dawned on him that he wasn't dead. The air around felt colder and if he was dead, he wouldn't be able to notice that. He opened his eyes. It was darker than before but he could tell that the ground below him wasn't gold, but grey. He put his hands down and felt the rock. Then he realised with a jolt that his chains were gone, as was his Asgard armour. He sat up on his knees and looked about him. He was in a cave.

Loki saw that was only one exit, which was where the only light was coming from. Seeing no other course of action, he rose to his feet and followed the light, hoping that there were answers at its source.

The Tunnel was short and narrow and opened up into a wide chamber. There was a large wood fire in the centre of room, being the only source of light and heat that Loki could see. There was a sound of scratching rock behind him and when he turned, the tunnel he had just left was gone. The light from the fire showed him a barren empty space. In fact the only other thing in the room of note was a raised platform carved out of the rock.

Loki turned as he heard the scratching sound again, this time coming from the far end of the chamber. Another figure entered and Loki nearly laughed out loud when he saw that it was Odin.

The Allfather spotted Loki in a second. "You did this. What sorcery brought us here?"

Before Loki could reply, a blinding light filled the chamber and three figures stood on the platform, each bathed in their own white light. Once Loki could see clearly, he saw that they were three breathtakingly beautiful women. The Norns, beings Loki never expected to see. Maybe he was dead after all and Odin with him.

"We brought you here, Odin Allfather. We can no longer stand by while you allow yourself to be driven by your madness. We have plans and you will not disrupt them." The voices of the Norns spoke as one, in perfect unison.

Odin was too angry that he had seemingly failed to kill Loki again that he hadn't registered who he was talking to. "I am the King of Asgard, I am the Allfather and you will return me to Asgard with that thing for his judgement."

"We are the Norns, Allfather and it is we who will pass judgement on you both."

Odin is stunned into silence. Like Loki and nearly everyone else on Asgard, he never expected to actually be in the presents of the Fates. It was well known that you could seek their wisdom in one of the Wells of Fate, but even that came at a price, one that was sometimes too high for some.

The women continued. "Loki Laufeyson and Odin Borson. Between you, you have brought the Nine Realms to the brink of ruin. Three realms have suffered most as a result and on these charges

you will receive our judgement. There will be no need to defend yourselves, for we have seen all.”

The Norns turned to Loki first. “Loki, you have taken life to fuel your revenge and have brought the titan Thanos closer to the Branches of Yggdrasil than ever before. But you were wronged by both your Father and Odin, and you have also acted in defence of the Universe when you aided Thor in the defeat of the Dark Elves. You are strong, more powerful than even you can guess and have a destiny brighter than any other if you can be channelled down the correct path.”

The Norns turned again to Odin. “Odin Allfather. You were once a wise King, who made war only when the need arose. You showed mercy when you took a dying child to raise as your own, but you lost your way. You condemned Thor for arrogance but were blinded by that same arrogance. You have allowed yourself to be driven by your grief, blaming everyone for Frigga’s death. We tell you it was her time and it was a noble death, worthy of Valhalla. You committed the worse crime on Asgard, as you were willing to sacrifice every one of your people to kill Malekith rather than provide any aid to your much wiser son.”

Loki couldn’t help but laugh at the idea of someone thinking Thor wise. His brother had incredible luck and the aid of strong allies but Loki would never call him wise.

Two of the Norns stepped down, one each going to stand by Loki and Odin. “For his selfless aid in the defeat of the Dark Elves, Loki you have been excused of your crimes against Asgard and Jotunheim. Asgard has received little harm from your rule, and Jotunheim chose to begin the conflict, it was your response which was unbalanced. Odin for your arrogance and the danger you placed on Asgard for your own revenge, we charge you with restoring Jotunheim.”

Odin looked shocked. “It can’t be done, not without the Casket of Ancient Winters and Loki still had it in his keeping when he fell into the void. For all I know the mad Titan has it now.”

“That is our charge. You are to provide aid to those who remain and do everything in your power to make the realm liveable again. Fail in this and you will be removed and will be sent to Helheim dead or otherwise. Also we return Thor’s powers to him as you have proved yourself unworthy to be the keeper of such powers as Mjolnir.” Without another word, Odin vanished in a flash of bright light.

Loki still stood in the chamber. He had said nothing during the whole time since he entered the cave. Now he spoke. “What else do you wish of me? There must be more or I would’ve been sent back with Odin.”

The Norns turned to him again as one, their faces blank. Loki found the whole thing a little disturbing.

“Loki, there are still your crimes on Midgard. That realm was innocent, cut off from the rest of Yggdrasil until your actions forced them in to a universe they were unready for. The Jotun deaths were a fact of war, but those on Midgard were unwarranted and unnecessary. You must pay for those. From now until a day one year hence, you shall live as one of them. Not as Aesir or Jotun, but a mortal human. You will be permitted to keep your magic during that year. If by the end, you have been unable to earn redemption for your crimes, what remains will be stripped from you and you will end your short days as a Mortal.”

It was Loki’s turn to look shocked. “I do not wish redemption. I tire of pain and suffering. I welcomed death at Odin’s hands and ask the same from you. End my life, end my pain. I assure you, I will be no loss to the cosmos and it would be justice for all I have killed.”

“Your path is laid out for you, Loki and you must walk it. At the end you will find the peace you

seek, but you must carry out the deeds appointed for you.”

The last thing Loki saw was a blinding light and then nothing.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Loki is returned to Earth to begin his sentence

Thor awoke with a start. It had been the most vivid dream he could remember. Loki and his father were standing awaiting judgement from the Norms. He had experienced strange dreams before, but that had been after he had consumed vast quantities of a beverage Stark called Absinthe. Still there was something about the dream which made him think that maybe it was more than a dream. It felt too real, similar to the Vision he had had in the Well of Fates.

Thor got up from the bed, leaving Jane sleeping peacefully. The Bifrost had put him down back on Earth, not 10 feet from Jane's home in New Mexico, something for which he thanked Heimdall for. He hadn't been back to the Avengers yet, wishing to stay close to the Bifrost site, waiting for news. He fully expected that Odin would inform him when Loki had been executed, to stick the knife a little further into his gut. He knew his Father was fully capable of cruelty but never knew he was vindictive. For the first time ever he thanks the Norms that Loki disrupted the ceremony all those years ago. Maybe if he hadn't Thor would now simply be a younger version of his Father and Thor couldn't think of nothing worse. On the other hand Loki was currently facing death and Thor couldn't think of nothing worse than that either.

Thor slipped on some sweat pants and silently headed outside. The sky was full of stars and Thor could be alone with his thoughts. He wasn't alone for long. One star suddenly seemed to get brighter the longer he looked at it. It soon became a fire ball of white light and it was heading straight for Thor.

The ball of light hit the ground and for a moment the entire night sky lit up. Thor was blinded for a few seconds. He blinked rapidly before he was able focus on the scene in front of him. Before him stood the Norms, each shining with their own light. The women in the centre carried Mjolnir. Thor took a double take before he spotted the body on the floor in front of them.

"Thor Odinson, we return to you your foster brother, Loki Laufeyson. We have judged him and he will now carry out his sentence. He will live in this realm for one year as a mortal. In this time he must earn redemption. You will not aid him in this, he must find his own path. We also return to you Mjolnir, unjustly taken from you and with it your power."

Without another word, the Norms faded away as if they were never there and if it hadn't have been for the Hammer and Loki's still form, Thor would have thought he had dreamed the whole thing. He rushed to Loki's side, pleased to discover that he was breathing, but unconscious. He was dressed in thin leggings and a tunic, which left him exposed to the cold of the desert so Thor hurriedly picked him and carried him into the house. Mjolnir, he left outside. No one other than Vision (or possible Steve if he was honest with himself) could move it so his only concern was for Loki.

Once inside, he laid Loki on Jane's couch and began to examine him. To his surprise, Loki had more colour in cheeks than before and his skin was not as cold to the touch as it had been. Thor

was no healer and couldn't tell if what the Norns said was true, but Loki certainly seemed changed physically.

Thor had been so engrossed in his brother that he hadn't heard Jane stirring in the bedroom. Noticing he wasn't in bed, she went looking for him.

"Thor, is everything ok? It stil....." Jane stopped when she saw who was lying on the couch.

"Thor, is that Loki?"

"Yes. The Norns have visited me this night. He has received judgement from them. He is mortal now." Thor said, torn between happiness that his brother was alive and confusion over what his return meant.

"What does any of that mean? Aren't the Norns benevolent none interfering spirits or something?" Asked Jane as she walked to the couch. She looked at Loki sleeping form, her feelings as mixed up as Thor. The man before her had killed hundreds in New York, but she couldn't help remembering how he had protected her several times from the elves on the Dark World when he didn't need to and how much his apparent death had effected Thor.

"The Norns are the Norns. They decide the fate of all in the Nine realms. Although, I have never heard of them interfering like this, not in any story or song, but Loki would know more." Thor answered.

"Ok. We need to decide the next step, but that can wait till he wakes up. I take it no matter what, we're heading to New York." Jane surmised. Thor nodded. "That's fine. The Dean at the University wanted me do some guest lectures and Erik can always use my help. Move him into the spare room and I'll get some breakfast going."

Thor looked towards the window and noticed that the sun was just touching the horizon. There would no more sleep for him tonight so he carried Loki the spare bedroom and laid him on the bed. When he was like this, Thor could help but notice just how young and innocent his brother could look. He torn himself away to re-join Jane.

Loki slept for the rest of that day and well into the following morning. He woke to the sound of Thor snoring in a chair next to the bed. He attempted to slip from the bed quietly, but Thor wasn't in a deep sleep and woke when he heard his brother moving.

"At last, Loki. I was beginning to worry. Are you well?" Thor asked quickly.

"I am unsure. How long have I been here?" Loki guessed it hadn't been that long or his brother would be frantic with worry.

"The Norns brought you to me yesterday morning and you have slept since then. They told me that they have passed judgement on you and have made you mortal."

"That is what they told me. I have one year to earn redemption for the crimes I committed on Midgard. They have allowed me to keep my magic for now but if I fail that will be stripped from me as well and I will live a short, pitiful existence as a mortal." Loki explained.

"And if you succeed?"

“I can go home.” Loki looked at his hands. They looked the same as always, if a little less pale. He could still feel his magic so at least that much was the truth. He guessed the ultimate test would be if he could still take his Jotun form. He searched for the edges of his glamour. Nothing, it wasn’t there. The skin he was looking at was his own.

Loki looked at Thor and for the first time since they were children, Thor saw genuine fear in the younger man’s eyes. He moved to his brother side and crushed him close to his chest. Loki allowed himself to be held and slowly the tears ran down his face.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Thor is worried for Loki and decides it time to take him to the Avengers

The next few days, Loki didn't speak and ate only when food was practically forced into his hand. This had both Thor and Jane starting to get really concerned.

"Thor, he needs to see a Doctor. We need to know for sure that he is human. He pretended to be dead, who can say that this isn't another trick. And if he is, he needs help, help we can't give him" Jane asked, after Thor had led Loki to his room.

"Jane, the Norns brought him here and what he has told me matches the dream I had." Thor replied. Still his father words returned to him. He had put his faith in Loki many times and had been betrayed more than once. Maybe it would be better to get a healer to confirm what Loki said.

"Dr Cho had agreed to stay at the Avengers Headquarters to continue her research before I left. She, I think, can be trusted and the rest of the Avengers need to know that Loki is here. It will be safer for him there, I do not think the people of this realm will be very forgiving towards him." Thor continued.

Jane nodded. She had had an email for Erik that morning telling her that he would be heading back to London for a few days to recover some of his documents he had left there so now would be a good time to take Loki to New York. Erik had recovered from the effects of the Sceptre but it still would be a shock to find that Loki was not only alive, but on Earth again.

"Ok, you go. I'll finish things here and join you in a few days"

Thor nodded. He went outside to where Mjolnir still sat on the ground. At first, his concern for Loki had pushed all other things from his mind. Now, he found he had avoided the Hammer. It was of Asgard and after everything that had happened, Thor wasn't sure he wanted to be Aesir anymore. Odin had betrayed everything Thor had held dear about his home and he had hurt Thor so much that he wasn't sure that Loki was wrong about the Allfather anymore. Still the powers of Mjolnir were almost unlimited and Thor felt he would need every scrap of his strength if he was to bring his brother back to him.

Thor reached down and gripped Mjolnir's handle. He felt the familiar warmth from the leather, his mind filled with the subtle hum he had missed so much and he knew that once more he and the Hammer were one. Unlike the last time he regained Mjolnir, there was no lighting strike. Just as it had melted away in the throne room, his armour seemed to fade in to being around his body. Thor could only think that it was because there was no impending danger.

Thor went back inside. Jane didn't say anything, knowing just how reluctant he had been to become the Thunderer again. She just hoped Loki was grateful to his brother for what he was doing for him.

The next morning, Thor kissed Jane goodbye before swinging the hammer and taking off, Loki tucked tight into his side. Thor had hoped his brother would teleport them but he was as silent and disinterested as he had been since he arrived. The trip didn't take too long as Thor travels much faster than other human modes of travel.

They landed in the grounds of Avengers HQ in the early afternoon. They were met by Vision and greeted him warmly.

"My friend, it good to see you. Have you chosen a name yet?" He asked. Vision shook his head, his eyes fixed on Loki.

Loki had hung back, trying to remain unnoticed, but when he saw the new Avenger he moved forward to get a better look. His eyes were wide when he saw the stone in the artificial beings forehead.

He turned to look at Thor. "The Mind Stone?"

Thor nodded. "We found your Sceptre. The Vision is now its keeper."

"The Mind Stone was in the Sceptre?" Loki couldn't believe it. Heimdall had told him about the creature Ultron and Vision but not what had created them both. Loki had assumed Stark and Banner had been the Masterminds.

It was Thor's turn to look surprised. "You didn't know, Brother?"

Loki focused again on the Stone. Suddenly, it became clear the true extent of the power he had wielded all those years ago. Had he known he held an Infinity Stone in his hand, he would have fled the nine realms and never looked back.

"No, I never knew. What are you?" Loki's question was directed to Vision.

Vision was staring at Loki with the same intensity as Loki was staring at him. "I am a protector of mankind. All the strengths and flaws they possess. They are unique in the universe, something I hope you come to appreciate."

Something must have alerted the other Avengers, because as Vision had been talking, Steve and Natasha came out to say hello. They both stopped dead when they saw Loki.

"Thor, what is he doing here? Isn't he supposed to be dead?" Steve asked. He was clearly on edge and looking for a weapon as he didn't have his Shield. Natasha slipped a small knife from her boot, she was always armed.

Loki noted all of this and retreated again in to the well of depression. Maybe these two would end the torment he was living in. Thor stepped forward quickly and Vision went to Loki's side a little like a bodyguard.

"My friends so much has changed since I left for Asgard. My Brother has been judged by the Norns, the fates who sent me my vision. He is mortal now." Thor said, standing between the Loki and the other Avengers.

"How do you it's not another of his lies? Is it even possible?" Natasha shot back at him, her eyes never leaving the God of Mischief.

"I can give only my word that what has happened is true. I was told by the Norns themselves." Thor replied. He knew that convincing his fellow Avengers would be hard and they probably need

proof he couldn't provide. Still he had to try.

"Thor, you have to understand, were it anything else, your word would be enough, but with him. I'm sorry, we can't take that chance." Steve said firmly, but mixed with sympathy. He was also keeping an eye on Loki and he could tell there was something wrong. Loki was withdrawn, was almost shrunken. Not physically but in spirit. This wasn't the man he fought in Germany.

Thor nodded. "My brother will submit to whatever tests you wish. Dr. Cho must have something to prove the truth."

Steve coincided his options. He looked to Natasha, who after a moment, nodded slightly. This made up Steve's mind. "Ok, take him to the Doctor's lab. If he is human, we'll discuss what happens next."

Thor sighed in relief. He took Loki's arm and guided him towards the HQ entrance. Steve stopped him and Thor met the other man's eye.

Vision, noting the exchange said "I shall take him." And led Loki inside, Natasha close behind.

Steve waited until they were alone. "Thor, what's the matter with him? The Loki we fought in New York would never have submitted like that."

Thor shook his head. "He has been this way since he first awakened here. I saw much of what transpired in a vision. He begged the Norns for death. I think his spirit may be finally broken."

"You said he was judged. Was his punishment simply to be made human?"

"No, Captain. He has been given a chance to earn redemption. He still has his magic and one year to make amends. If he fails, only then will he be truly mortal. I do not think it likely he will achieve this unless he can learn to fight again."

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

The Avengers try to figure out the best way to deal with the current situation.

Chapter Notes

I know that Helen Cho wasn't a actual medical doctor, but then neither was Bruce and most of us use him as such, so I'm doing the same with her.

Dr. Cho carried out every test she could think of and found Loki was completely human. He was however on the upper scale for everything. He was an example of human perfection and rivalled Steve on things such as metabolism, muscle tone and strength. Even his brain patterns were above average and were similar to Wanda's. It was the closest thing, short of a demonstration, to proving he could still use magic. He was given a room with Vision as his permeant companion.

The rest of the Avengers gathered in the meeting room. Thor explained the events that followed his departure from Earth and everything he had seen in his vision and been told by the Norns. As the new members of the team had only seen the official report into the events of the Battle of New York, Steve, Thor and Natasha filled them in on everything that was left out of the report.

The other Averages looked as unsure of the situation as Steve felt.

Sam Wilson kicked of the discussion. "I don't think there is a court on Earth qualified to judge this guy."

"My bother has been judged and given his sentence by the Norns. We must abide by their ruling." Thor said.

"Thor, the people of New York won't care about the justice handed down by aliens from another planet. They will want him tried before a human court." Rhodey countered.

"The Norns hold sway across the whole of the nine realms, including Midgard. There is no higher justice."

"Ok, what about inside the Avengers. Erik works here, Tony and Clint are both on sabbaticals. They all have a reason to be more than a little upset with your brother. What do you think they'll do when they find out he's alive?"

Thor found he couldn't answer that and wisely said nothing. Steve picked up the doctors report and read it again. It provided him with the excuse he needed to put off making a decision today.

"Right now, there is nothing we can do. Loki is in no state of mind where he can be tried by any court. According to Dr. Cho, he only just above a catatonic state and I won't hand him over to anyone until he is able to defend himself." Steve's tone made it clear the discussion was over.

The rest of the Avengers files out of the room, leaving only Steve and Wanda alone. Steve looked at the young women. "Is everything ok?" He asked.

"May I see him?" the Scarlet Witch asked.

Steve hesitated for a second, wondering why she want to see Loki, but slid the photo from the file across the table. Wanda picked it up and looked at it. Steve tried to see what she was thinking, but her face as always was unreadable. She put the photo down and left the room. Steve suddenly got a very uncomfortable feeling in his stomach.

Loki sat in the small furnished room awaiting his fate yet again. He couldn't understand why the people he met were so reluctant to do what was necessary. He was sure that if the roles were reversed, he wouldn't hesitate to take vengeance for the crimes against him. Hadn't he already killed his own father for abandoning him?

His door slid open and Thor and Captain Rogers entered the Room. They were both unarmed so Loki guess they weren't here to kill him.

"Loki, the Avengers have agreed to shelter you for the time being. You will have free run of the facility common areas, but there are parts that will remain closed to you. Do you understand Loki?" Thor question was met with deathly silence. Thor and the Captain looked at each other.

"Loki, do you understand? We're trying to help you here." The Captain continued gently.

Knowing they would never leave him alone without an answer, Loki replied, "Yes I understand, now leave me be."

Loki turned his back to the other men. Thor shook his head and left, but Steve stayed a little longer. He watched Loki's back, feeling he should say or do something to help the former God. When he couldn't think of anything else, he reached out and squeezed Loki's shoulder gently, trying to tell him everything would be ok, before he also left.

When he was alone, Loki put his hand where Steve had touched him and a tear slid down his cheek. Thor was his brother and would always care for him, but that someone else would wish to give him comfort was a little overwhelming and he wasn't sure what to do.

Loki had been in Avenger HQ for a week and still no one had seen him outside his room. Thor had taken him meals, making sure he ate and Steve had sat with him a few times, trying to bring him out of himself, but no one else tried to see him. Vision would spend hours outside his room and when asked why, he would look blank. Thor guessed it had something to do with the fact that Loki had used the Mind Stone, remembering their first meeting in the grounds.

Steve had called Erik and to say the scientist was unhappy that Loki was alive, let alone staying at the base was an understatement. At first he simply refused to return. The arrival of Jane Foster helped. She rented a large house not too far away and offered for Erik to stay with her there for a while. As Loki was restricted from the Labs and never left his room anyway, it was unlikely they the pair would run into each other so in the end Erik agreed to carry on working with Avengers.

Steve also called Tony to let him know. He surprised that Tony took the news with relaxed calm. Steve guessed that it helped that they had found that Phil Coulson was really alive and that Tony had no plans to return to the Avengers in the near future. Whatever the reason, Steve was happy

that it was one less thing he had to worry about.

Clint was another matter. The man still carried an understandable grudge against Loki. Steve talk to Natasha about the best course of action. As much as she hated lying to her nearly brother, she agreed that there would be no benefit telling Clint anything until they were certain what the next step with Loki was.

Of course, they hadn't expected someone else to come to a different decision.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

An old friend pays an unfriendly visit.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Thor had just left Loki's room, having been summoned to a briefing. Loki couldn't help feeling grateful as the God of Thunder was starting to smother him with concern. Loki tolerated him as he knew Thor meant well, but his patience had limits and Thor was getting close.

Loki's isolation had given a lot of time to think about this sentence. The bitterness of his situation was becoming all he could think about. Odin had been judged as he had been, but Loki couldn't help feeling that the Allfather had been treated less harshly than himself. The man was insane but had been allowed to return to rule Asgard once more. All he had to do was to provide aid to Jotunheim, which with the right Magic was not as hard as it sounded. Even Thor, who Loki couldn't hate if he tried, had just been handed back Mjolnir and he had started the war with Jotunheim in the first place.

Loki was starting to feel that his punishment was cruel and slowly he could feel resentment and the need for revenge creeping back into his heart.

Loki was led on the bed, his back to the door and didn't turn when it opened, thinking it was Thor returning.

"He's got some nerve bringing you back here." a voice growled behind him.

Loki shot up and turned to the door, already knowing who was standing there. Clint was in the doorway, a gun in his hand pointing at Loki. Thor couldn't have known the archer was here or he would never have left him. Clint advanced slowly never taken his eyes from the man on the bed, allowing the door to close.

"I knew that you being dead was too good to be true. You can con your way out of anything, well not this time. You're human now so when I kill you, you'll stay dead." Clint eyes burned with hate. Loki knew he meant every word and this could be his way out.

"Where do you want me?" Loki asked calmly.

Clint just stared for a moment, completely taken back by the question. "What?"

"Where I am to stand? Will you kill me quickly or slowly?"

"Why the hell are you talking like this? You don't want to die." Clint stammered. He couldn't see what Loki was up to.

"I do. I wish this suffering to end. I have nothing to live for, to fight for and my life has been on borrowed time as you would say, since Odin kidnapped me." Loki explained simply.

Clint surged forward, pressing the gun to Loki's temple. "No, this is a trick. Some play to stop me. Now get on your knees."

Loki complied, sinking to his knees and lowering his head so Clint didn't have to look in his eyes. He heard him cock the gun and closed his eyes.

"CLINT, STOP"

Loki cursed and opened his eyes to see the Captain and the Widow entering the room. The Widow had Clint disarmed and restrained in seconds. He so focused on killing Loki, he wasn't able to put up much of a fight.

"Get him out of here, Nat and keep him away from Thor. We'll sort him out when he's calmer." Steve said, breathless.

He and Natasha had run the whole to Loki's room when Thor had turned up in his office, surprised to find there was no briefing. They sent him to look around the perimeter to check for intruders, before heading to Loki's room, guessing that whatever was going on, it would have something to do with their new house guest and it would be better to keep Thor out of the way until they had all the facts.

Once they were alone, Steve reached down to help Loki to his feet. Loki glared at the hand.

"Why did you stop him? All this would have been over." Snarled Loki.

The truth dawned on Steve. "You wanted him to kill you. Well, that is tough. You want to die, there is the door, I'm sure you'll find a way. I didn't stop him for you, I stopped him for him. Revenge is a dark road that few can return from whole and the man has enough blood on his hands already."

"That is a sentimental view, Captain. Revenge is his right." Loki replied, a thin smile on his face.

"And when he kills you, Thor will want revenge for your death. We would have to stop him and on and on it goes. Violence gets more violence and it never ends. It's not like your revenge has helped you. You tried to kill your people because your father abandoned you. You tried to take over Earth because Thor loves it and you wanted him to hurt. Where did you end up? A human on Earth, a world that hates you."

"Who are you judge me? I have had my world ripped from me. I believed that I had a place in the universe, that I had family and a home. Then I found that I was in truth a Prisoner in a gilded cage, a beast that everyone hated. The Father who was meant to love me unconditionally cast me out because how I was born and my other Father wants me dead for being what he made me." Loki shouted, jumping to his feet, tears threatening in his eyes.

Steve suddenly felt very angry. "You think you are the only one who has ever lost everything they ever knew. My world vanished around me while I was frozen in the ice, everyone I knew, everything that mattered gone. I don't think this world I've woken up in is any better than the one I left, despite how far we've come and the sacrifices that have been made. To make it worse, my best friend is out there somewhere alone, with no idea who he is, maybe wanting to kill me. So I'm sorry if my sympathy is running a little thin with you feeling sorry for yourself."

Steve stormed out of the room, clearly upset. Loki was shocked by Steve's outburst. He had never imagined that there would be anyone who would understand what had happened to him, but this mortal seemed to at least in general terms. He wasn't suddenly a member of a different species, but

he was still different from the rest of his race. He had also been lied to and betrayed by the people he believed in, if everything Thor had told Loki about SHIELD and Hydra was true.

The Captain also made another good point. Revenge had led him down a very dark path. After the fall from the bridge, his experiences at the hands of Thanos and the Other left him with memories he tried very hard to block out and his attack on Midgard had put him in a cell, only one step from the axe. Now, he was adrift with no real idea of where he was headed and what he needed to do. The Norns said he had a destiny but he had no clue as to what that could be.

Natasha dragged Clint into a small meeting room and locked the door behind them.

“Did you really think you were going to get away with that? Do you know what Thor would have done when he found out?” Natasha yelled at Clint.

“I don’t care, that piece of filth deserves to die. Why are you and Cap protecting him? Thor I get, but you two?” Clint answered, his voice low towards the end as the hints of betrayal slipped in.

Natasha took a seat next to him. “Clint, haven’t we found out the hard way that you’ll never resolve things by more killing. Does Laura know you’re here?” Clint shook her head. “Ok, look I don’t know how to make any of this right, but you’re supposed to be spending time with your wife and kids. Go home, give us time to decide what to do with Loki, but you need to talk to someone. I know you bluffed your way through the SHIELD councillors, but you never fooled me. If you want to stay with us, you need find a way to deal with what happened, a way that doesn’t involve murder. Please Clint.”

Clint glared at Natasha, but his expressions softened when he saw how worried she was. Natasha always hid her feeling, so she must be really worried if it was written on her face. Slowly he nodded, but said “I don’t know if I can stay here with him in the building.”

Natasha shrugged and smiled. “There are always ways, Barton.”

Chapter End Notes

Not 100% on the interaction between Natasha and Clint, but there we go

Chapter 8

Loki wondered the corridors, looking for the right room. He had been given a layout of the building, but each route he took seemed to lead to areas that were restricted. He knew he should have taken Vision up on his offer to guild him, but Loki couldn't help finding being around the Mind Stone uncomfortable. Vision had at least pointed him in the right direction, the Gym.

Loki eventually ran into Sam. Falcon was surprised to see Loki out of his room. He had seen the file photo or he wouldn't have recognised him.

"Umm. Can I help you? I think Thor is visiting Jane right now" Sam asked. He knew Loki had certain freedoms, but it still paid to be on guard with him.

"So he informed me before he left. I was told the Captain would likely be in the Gym, but I find my options to reach there limited." Loki replied. Thor had told him that Tony, Bruce and Clint had left the Avengers and new members had been recruited. This must be one of them, but which he was unsure.

"Ok, well this isn't a great time, he's using the punch bags right now and that is never pretty." Sam warned. When Loki looked confused, he continued. "He tends to burst them when he's in a bad mood. He was on 4 and counting when I left."

Loki understood. "As I fear I am the cause, I would ask that you help me reach there. There is matter I wish to talk to him about which cannot wait."

It was Sam's turn to look surprised. That was not what he had expected to hear, given everything he was told about their house guest. Still, it was the guy's head. If Cap ripped it off, that was up to him. "Ok, this way. I'm Sam by the way, people call me Falcon."

Loki nodded his acknowledgment "I take it you know who I am?"

"You could say that. You're the talk of the base, most of it's not good."

Loki said nothing. He wasn't surprised, there were more out there than just Hawkeye who want to see him dead.

They continued in silence which was a relief on both side. Loki hadn't been that far away and they arrived quickly.

"Well, I'll see you." Sam said simply to be polite. Loki nodded his head again. He waited until Sam turned the corner then entered the Gym.

The punch bags were on the far side of a massive exercise facility, which contained a wide range of equipment and a large boxing ring. While he couldn't see it, he knew there was a swimming pool too. It would seem Stark had spared no expense when fitting out the facility for his team mates.

Sam had been right. Steve was still taking out his feelings on the leather bags and there were now 5 or 6 on the floor. Loki came closer, but not enough to disturb Steve and watched. Even from where he was standing, Loki could make out the outline of the Captain frame through his t-shirt. Loki had to admit the man was strong, a god among his own race and very handsome. Loki had seen how the female SHIELD agents had fallen over themselves to get close to Steve while he had been a prisoner on the Helicarrier. It had meant nothing to him at the time, now he could understand the attraction. Not that that mattered to him, Loki told himself.

Steve had begun a round of particularly hard punches and the tired bag gave way, the chain that attached it to the ceiling snapping and the contents spilling on to the floor. Loki heard Steve sigh. He had clearly had enough as he turned away and looked straight at Loki.

Steve was shocked to see Loki out of his room. The pair stood for a few minutes unsure what to do next.

Steve broke the silence. "So you finally decided to join the rest of the world again. Well that's a step forward anyway."

From anyone else, that statement could have been taken as sarcastic, but that wasn't Steve and though Loki had only known him a short time, he knew that the Captain would never go out of his way to be cruel.

"I'm not sure why, but I wanted to talk to you again. My brother could never understand me before, so there is little chance of him doing so now. You I think may. You may understand why I wish the end" Loki said.

"Look Loki, I'm not sure what you want from me. I can't help you with your problems, you need a professional to talk to. That's assuming there is one even qualified to deal with what you've been through." Steve replied. It wasn't that he didn't want to help, it's just he coped with his issues by focusing on the next mission or anything else he could think of to avoid them. He wasn't sure what would happen if he stopped and thought properly about everything he had lost, not just from 70 years ago, but the friendships recently too.

"Captain, the truth of my situation is this. I have lived my whole life fighting. Before Thor was banished, it was fighting for approval from the Aesir, for Odin's love and attention and to be seen as something other than Thor's little brother. After, I was fighting the universe. I fought the stay alive in the void, I fought Thanos until he stripped every part of me away and made me beg to do his bidding just to get away from the pain, I fought you and your avengers so I could escape him and I fought the Dark Elves for the sake of a universe that hates me. Tell me, after all that would you be ready to let someone end it all. I am done, Captain. I wanted it all to stop. If Odin had succeeded in executing me, it would have been the first act of real kindness he has ever shown me." Loki was shaking as he spoke. He stopped, trying to calm himself a little before going on.

Steve found he couldn't say anything for a moment. What Loki had said felt like a confession, a confidence and 100% the truth. Steve didn't think he was finished yet either.

"The punishment from the Norns wasn't being made mortal, it was being forced to carry on living in this cursed existence. I have nothing, I belong nowhere and all those I knew have turned their backs on me, rightly so. Ever Thor will turn away again, not any time soon but it will happen. They say I have some sort of destiny but the only future I have ever seen is loneliness." Loki turned away, trying to hide the tears.

Steve looked at the other man's back and for the first time, felt truly sorry for him. He wasn't blameless for his fate, nor did he say he was, but there was more than one reason for the choices he made and Steve wondered, if he was in the same position, what he would have done differently.

"Loki.....Loki, I.....I can't imagine what it has been like for you. You right, you've had to live though more than anyone should have, but you survived. You're here, you're alive and that isn't the time to give up. If you let someone just take you out, wouldn't that mean that Odin has won and from what Thor had told me, the guy doesn't deserve to win."

Loki turned and looked at the Captain, pondering on what he had said. Odin had been the cause of

so much of Loki's pain and while he knew that there were better ways he could have handled things, other paths he could have chosen, it still boiled down to the truth that from the very beginning, it had been between him and his Father. Everything else, even Thanos had been paled by comparison and he wasn't going to let Odin beat him now.

"Very well, Captain. What do you suggest I do? I am mortal and can't leave this realm, where am I to go?" Loki asked.

"Well, you could stay here. We could use your skills and knowledge, but you still need to talk to someone. You have things you really need to work through."

"I will talk to you. I do not bare my soul to everyone, Captain."

"Loki, I'm not qualified to....." Steve started

Loki interrupted him. "I will talk only to you and in exchange you will talk to me. If I am to exorcise my daemons, then it is only fair that you should do the same. From what you said, you carry at least some of the pain I do and it would be better for the punch bags if nothing else if you could find some peace also."

Steve laughed at the last statement, looking around the room. He guessed that simply beating an object in to pieces wasn't helping as much as he thought.

"Ok, we'll try it, but if it's not helping I'll find someone you can talk to."

Loki nodded. Steve noticed that he hadn't agreed to help the Avengers, just to talk to Steve, but it was another step forward for former God and it gave something he could work with.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Loki and Steve get closer and Loki builds some bridges

Steve talked to Thor about getting Loki to help the Avengers and he seemed to think it was a good idea. Steve didn't mention the rest of what he and Loki had talked about. He knew that Loki had trusted him with his secrets and it was a trust that Steve couldn't afford to break if he was going to get anywhere with Loki.

Natasha also thought it was a good idea, but did warn Steve that it would mean that they wouldn't have Clint working with them as a result. Steve had expected this, but he had hoped that given some time Clint at least talk to him. Right now he was refusing. They had found out that it was Wanda who had tipped Clint off. Steve had given her a stern warning. He understood that she felt that she owed Clint somewhere along the line but for what Steve couldn't figure out. That still didn't mean she could go behind everyone's back. If she was going to part of the team, they needed to know they could rely on her.

The rest of the Avengers, as Loki hadn't caused any trouble so far, agreed to follow Steve lead for now, but Rhodey pointed out again that there could be trouble in the future if the public or the press found out Loki was there. Steve took it on board and made a mental note to give Pepper a call about how to handle the public relations side of things (Maria Hill had gone to help Coulson with the remnants of SHIELD).

Steve, at the advice of Sam (Steve needed all the help he could get and Sam was the closest thing to a councillor they had), decided not to sit Loki in a room and talk themselves horse. He began with putting Loki through his paces in the Gym. He had Dr Cho's medical report, but that couldn't tell Steve Loki's true physical condition. So Loki was put through the basic tests required for army entrance. Loki nearly fainted towards the end but he passed. It seems that he had spent less time on the training ground than Thor had, relying more on his magic and his latent strength and stamina of being a Frost Giant had helped him, even when he didn't know the truth. He may have be stronger and quicker than an average human but he was badly out of condition. So he now he was faced with a lot of training if he was going the reach the fighting ability he had before.

Steve however wasn't the trainers Loki had in his youth on Asgard. He didn't belittle him and jeer at him when he didn't achieve the goals that were set or if Thor beat him, both of which happened often. He did ban him from using his magic, as he didn't want Loki to be too dependent on it, but again he explained his reasoning behind the move rather than calling him weak and a woman. So after the first few punishing weeks, Loki found he was steadily improving and he was enjoying himself, both with the exercise and the Captain's company.

It took a week before Steve started gently probing into Loki's history, which Loki returned with questions of his own. They agreed in the beginning that there would be no lies, if this was going to work they had to honest. It was also agreed that if there was any question that the other didn't want

answer, all they had to do was say and they would move on until things became more comfortable. Slowly the talks became easier, the truth revealed and a couple of times tears shed on both sides. Progress was made and Loki even started calling Steve by his first name. They both needed to remind themselves that they couldn't get attached, that this had to stay professional, something both was finding a little difficult. Somewhere during those talks they became friends.

Loki began eating in the mess with everyone else, but to start with unless Steve or Thor were there he would sit alone. Vision was never far away, he followed Loki like a shadow (unless he was needed elsewhere), but he was alone the same. This solitude suited Loki for a while, but after spending more and more time with Steve, the time alone was getting harder and harder to cope with. Of all people, it was Erik who took the first leap.

Loki had been at the HQ for a month, when Erik sat in the chair opposite Loki. Loki was shocked and looked around to see if the mess hall had gotten very busy when he wasn't looking (he always ate during quiet times to avoid people). He saw that there were plenty of seats elsewhere and the few people in the room were looking at Erik, just as bewildered.

"Umm. I think you will find there are seats over at the table with the others who wish my death." Loki said shifting uncomfortably.

The scientist smiled, as if laughing at himself. "Loki, whether you believe me or not, your death isn't what I wake up thinking about every morning."

It was Loki turn the laugh. "You're right, I don't believe you. The last person I met who I used the Mind stone on, tried to put a bullet in my brain."

"Yes I heard about the Hawk. Cap told me, I think it was a hidden warning not to try anything. Your Brother is still in the dark or I think Barton would be missing a few limbs right now."

Loki still looked sceptical. "So Steve has a word and you don't hurt me. I'm sorry, but it's been pointed out to me by more than one of the none-Avengers here that you refused to return when you found I was here. What has changed?"

"Nothing. Loki, I don't want you dead. I won't deny that when Thor told me you had died during the convergence, I was relieved and I was shocked when I found out you were alive. I spent a lot of time dealing with the events in New York and I know Barton hasn't, that he has repressed almost everything. The link went both ways, I saw what that thing did to you, so I don't blame you for what happened. I just wanted you to know that. As for my living arrangements, I may have been reluctant to come back here at first, but the truth is that as Thor is living here to keep an eye on you and Darcy is not coming back with Ian from London till next month, I've been keeping Jane company. When Darcy is back, I'll be returning to my quarters here"

Loki didn't know what to say. There was so much about the Infinity Stones that he didn't know, that he was unsure if he could believe what Selvig was telling him. The one thing he was sure of was that the only other person he had told about his treatment by Thanos was Steve and for some reason he couldn't explain, he was certain that the Captain would never, ever betray the confidence they shared.

The pair ate their remaining meals in silence. Erik stood to leave but Loki called him back, his eyes settled on Vision.

"Tell me Doctor, why does Vision follow me around? It is a little unnerving." Loki asked

“He has followed me a few times and Barton, but never the way he is with you. Maybe you should ask him.” And with that, Erik headed back to his lab.

After that day, people began to include Loki into their activities. It was the Avengers mostly, but there were a few of the support staff as well. The Former SHIELD Agents who hadn't gone to join Coulson, refused point blank. Loki liked Sam and Rhodey, they were similar to Steve and hadn't been around during the events of New York so weren't carrying any sort of personal grudge. Wanda hovered on the edges, torn. She was loyal to Clint but Loki had powers she could only dream of and she wanted to learn from the former god. For Natasha, it was too soon for her to be anything more than polite to him. Given her affection for Clint, Loki was grateful for that.

Loki considered Erik advice and would have dismissed it, but the presence of Vision around him all the time finally worn him down. One morning, Loki left his room to find Vision standing outside and he had had enough.

“Why are you here? What do you gain by shadowing my every move?” Demanded Loki.

“You are a part of me.” Vision replied simply.

Loki was taken back by that answer. He irritation faded as his curiosity took over. “A part of you? How is that possible?”

“The Mind Stone is unique. You used the Stone to guide the actions of others and part of you remained. So just as the programmes that created Ultron and JARVIS are a part of me, so are you and all those you controlled.”

Loki wished, not for the first time that he could access the Library of Asgard to learn more of the Infinity Stones. This being was the keeper of the Mind Stone and as far as Loki could tell incapable of lies, but still he would like to know about these things from another source.

“That still doesn't explain why you watch my door and follow my every move.” said Loki, trying to sound put out.

“That I find harder to explain. I fear for you. There is a shadow over you. It has diminished since you arrived, but it still there” again Vision replied simply.

This Loki did understand. He found he didn't really have any more to say so he turned and headed to the mess for breakfast.

“The Captain is also unique among his kind and you should never fear to put your trust in him.” Vision said to his back.

Loki turned to look at him for a moment, then turned away again.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Loki gets a little frustrated

Chapter Notes

I may be a little slower posting the rest of this Story in the run up to Christmas, but don't worry it won't be forgotten.

Things got a little shaky about 7 weeks after Loki arrived. Loki and Steve had been in the boxing ring, trading punches. Thor had left them a little while ago, somehow feeling a tolerated but unwanted addition. He could tell that whatever was going on between the Captain and his brother, he wasn't helping.

Steve had the upper hand and suddenly Loki snapped, catching Steve with massive haymaker, which sent him crashing to the canvas. Loki then ripped off the gloves and bindings and stormed off to the pool. Steve was dazed for a few seconds, more from surprise than anything else. Once his head stopped spinning, Steve put away the gloves and followed.

Loki was already in the water and thrashing out the laps. As with everything he did, Loki looked graceful and Steve couldn't help but admire the other man's form. Steve was a comfortable swimmer. It was one of those things he had been told not to do as a kid because of his Asthma, so he had insisted that Bucky teach him. It had come in handy when he decided to jump off planes in to the sea without a parachute. Still, it wasn't his most favourite type of exercise, preferring dry land and plunging an airplane in the sea and getting frozen for 70 years hadn't done a lot to improve his opinion. So he sat back and watched Loki, only vaguely aware that he liked what he was seeing.

Loki swam for about 30min none stop and in the end Steve had to throw a float gently at him to get his attention. Loki growled at the Captain and threw the float back hard, causing Steve to duck.

"Alright, what's up?" Steve yelled, a little annoyed that he was target practice.

Loki remained silent for a little while. Steve, certain that he wasn't going to have something else thrown at him, moved to sit at the edge of the pool, ignoring how wet his clothes were getting.

Loki sighed. "I'm sorry, I'm just feeling a little frustrated at present. I haven't been outside the facility grounds in weeks. I was under the impression that I would be putting my magic at your disposal but all I have done is talk, eat and train. I could have been useful to you when you faced that Hulk like creature, but you left me behind."

The Abomination had broken out of the research facility run by General Ross and the Avengers had been called in to contain him. The guy had even less control over the rage monster than Bruce had and had no ability to change back. It had been a simple if tough mission, but Steve had to agree that

Loki could have been a big help.

“Umm. You never really said that you were interested in helping us and I wasn’t going to push it if you didn’t want to.” Steve said carefully, not wishing to upset Loki any more.

“I thought that was point of me talking to you, so that you think that I was ready to give you my aid.”

“Ok, we were talking because that is what we both needed. I didn’t do it just to get you to help us. I wanted to help you to help. I’m sorry you didn’t get that.” Steve was upset, so he went to stand and leave. Loki reached up and grabbed the other man’s wrist.

“Steve, stop. I know you were talking to me for no other reason than to help. I have valued the time we spend together and I wish it to continue, but I can’t sit idle, it is driving me insane. I wish to give you my aid. It may help with whatever I am meant to do here.” Loki was suddenly aware of the skin under his hand, how soft it was and he wondered absently if it was the same on other parts of Steve’s body.

Steve sat down again also aware that Loki hadn’t removed his hand. He ignored it. “Ok, if that’s what you want, I’ll talk to the guys that Tony left to sort out the uniforms. You’ll need something to protect you in the field.”

“My armour was always sufficient before.” Loki sounded a little offended.

“You weren’t human before. Don’t worry, you can have your input in to the design. As for getting you out and about, I’m heading to Brooklyn in a couple of days, you’re welcome to join me or I’m sure Thor will be visiting places with Jane. You’re not a prisoner here, Loki.” Steve said smiling.

“What if someone recognises me, will that not be a problem?” Loki asked looking concerned.

Steve frowned. “Can’t you create disguises, you were hiding as Odin for all those years after all.”

“That was when my true form was hidden by a Glamour. When my mother taught me, it was simply to change what was already there. Had she showed me how to create a glamour, I would have learnt the truth much sooner. This is my true form now, and without the resources of Asgard to provide the knowledge, ability to change my appearance is now beyond my grasp.” Loki replied grimly

Steve thought for a moment. He couldn’t ignore the fact that Loki was responsible for hundreds of deaths during the invasion and the suffering of hundreds more, but he had also been punished for those crimes, a punishment that could get worse if he failed at whatever he was meant to do. Steve had always believed that when a debt was paid, that was that and Loki was serving his sentence.

“Well it has been a few years and not many civilians saw you, so we could risk it if you want too.” Steve said, not 100% convinced himself.

“Very well, if you think it is safe, I would be happy to join you visit your old home.” Loki eyes dropped to Steve soaked clothes. Loki’s mischief reared its head. “As it would seem you are already wet, so it would shame to waste it.”

With that, Loki gripped Steve wrist tighter and dragged him into the pool. Steve wasn’t ready and took on a mouthful of water. He came up to the surface, spluttering and gasping for air. He glared at Loki, only for it disappear when he saw the first truly happy grin on the other man's face since he had arrived. Steve found himself grinning too.

“Right, you’re in for it” and he chased Loki round the pool, dunking and getting dunked whenever one of them was able. The game didn’t last long and as they climbed out of the pool, heading for the showers, Steve realised that he was more relaxed than he had been in a very, very long time.

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Everyone finds out

The trip to Brooklyn had to be put off as Steve got a call from Tony. He thought he may have a lead on Bruce. Bruce had vanished after the defeat of Ultron, but unlike the rest of the Avengers who were prepared to him the space he clearly needed, Stark was determined to find and bring him home. Steve left for the farm (Mansion) he had bought to try and convince him to leave things alone and wouldn't be back until the afternoon

Sam offered instead for Loki to come with him to his Veterans meetings. When he moved to Avengers HQ, he set up a support group similar to the one he had in Washington for soldiers recently invalidated out of the Armed Forces for PTSD. It kept him busy when he wasn't on missions. While Loki and Steve had not told Sam what they talked about, Sam wasn't dull and some of the questions Steve had asked early on made him think that Loki could benefit from listening to other people experiences.

The meeting went well. Loki had listened to everything that was said. There was one member of the group who had been held and tortured by extremists. He had been rescued but he still suffered from the flashback and Loki felt he could empathise with him. Afterward, Sam didn't talk about the meeting, knowing that Loki would go to Steve if he needed to. Instead, he suggested that they get lunch. They sat outside a small café and talked about Steve, mostly.

"I was starting to worry about him." Sam said. "It wasn't until I moved down here that I noticed just how much he was avoiding. He likes to make out to everyone that he is adjusted to the 21st century, but he really isn't. Have you noticed he never touches a computer, the most advanced thing he has is his phone and he only uses that to make calls?"

"I hadn't but I am still restricted from many of the areas of the base where him having contact with technology would occur. But I do agree there is much he has kept to himself that he needed to unburden himself of." Loki replied nodding. Loki knew that he could talk to Sam in general about Steve without being asked to reveal confidences, for which Loki was grateful.

"Well I'm not sure what you've been able to do that I haven't but he is more relaxed than before and it's only since you turned up."

They had been so engrossed in their conversation that they failed to notice the looks they were getting, or rather Loki was getting from someone across the street. A photo was taken and was on the social media websites in seconds.

It was Sam who finally notice the crowd that was gathering. His eyes flicked to Loki and back to the crowd.

"Umm Loki. We need to move." Sam said quickly. Loki got the urgency in his voice and nodded. Whatever the problem was, now was not the time for questions. Sam threw a handful of bills on the table and they stood to leave.

“LOKI!” A voice shouted. When he turned his head, a stone hit the side of his temple. He stumbled, knocking over a chair and after raising his hand to his head, found he was bleeding badly. The crowd now pushed forward and more things were thrown. Sam got hold of Loki’s arm and dragged him towards the nearest ally, already on his phone. The crowd followed close behind, shouting things Sam was certain he was glad he couldn’t make out. Loki knew they had to get away fast, so he pushed through the fog in his head and as soon as they were out of sight, he pulled Sam close and teleported them away.

As he was struggling to concentrate, Loki focused on safety as a destination. So Loki teleported them to Steve (not to Thor as he would have expected) and they landed in the middle of the briefing room. The agents in the room had their guns trained on Loki as the area was still restricted, but Sam waved them away. Loki, as a result of the combination of teleporting two people and the head injury, dropped to his knees, the blood flowing freely. Steve got his arm around him, stopping him falling to the floor.

“Sam, what the hell happened?” Steve shouted.

Sam moved to Loki’s other side and together they got him to his feet. “I have no idea who but someone made Loki and it started a riot. They were throwing things and I think it was a stone that caught him.”

“Great.” Steve hit his communicator. “Natasha, get on the news channels and the Social Media. Loki’s in the open. Call Pepper, I need that PR she suggested now.”

Between them, they got Loki to the medical bay, where Dr Cho checked him over. The head injury resulted in a bad concussion and she wanted to keep him sedated in the Medbay overnight to be safe. As if they needed more proof of how like Steve he was, the wound on his temple had almost completely healed. It was as if the Norns had based Loki’s mortal body on Steve.

Steve stayed with the sleeping Loki until Thor arrived. He had been visiting Jane. Now that Loki was settled and getting on with the other Avengers, he planned to move into the house she had rented the following week. After filling Thor in on what happened, Steve heading to his office to start dealing with the fallout.

Natasha meet him there. “It’s bad. A picture of Loki turned up on the web 20min before he turned up back here, I’ve got Vision running a trace on the cell phone. He’s still Jarvis and is better than the anything else we’ve got. The news feeds have just picked up the story. They haven’t identified Sam yet, but when they do it will lead them straight here. The only good thing we have is that all he was doing was eating. We can use it to help prove he’s not here up to no good. Pepper’s PR will be here in the morning.”

“Thanks. I knew it would come out sooner or later, but I was hoping we would have a few missions under our belts, show them he was here to make amends.” Steve said sadly. This was one of the worse ways this could have happened for Loki and at the wrong time. After Ultron, the feelings for the Avengers wasn’t as positive as they had been after New York. There were whispers of enhanced beings required to register with a new Government Agency. Loki turning up right now would only add fuel to that fire.

Steve rested his head in his hands. “Tell me I’ve done the right thing, Nat. Tell me that I should have taken Loki in. You’ve followed me without question, but I need what you think now.”

Natasha didn’t say anything for a moment. She had followed him and while she may not trust Loki,

Steve had never lead her a stray before. “Steve, you did the right thing. Loki deserves a second chance. I’ve killed, not on his scale, but I killed without concern for the consequences of my action, because the guy in charge told me to. I did it for the Russians, I did it for SHIELD. He is no different and he should get the same chance I got.”

Steve breathed out. He knew that Natasha would give him what he needed, but she wasn’t finished.

“That doesn’t mean you should trust him completely and don’t get attached, Steve. If he gets his ‘get back to Asgard free’ card, he’ll be gone and I don’t want you hurt when that happens.”

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Steve tries to find a way to keep Loki with the Avengers

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Steve sat with Loki the following morning. Thor had stayed with his brother all night and while he assured Steve he could manage perfectly well without sleep, Steve ordered him to get some anyway. Steve was avoiding the PR Pepper sent. She was dealing with the situation and was organising a press conference, even writing what Steve was going to say. Steve wasn't sure if that was a good idea but Pepper said this woman was the best so he was going with it for now.

It wasn't the only reason. Steve had been kept awake with what Natasha had said. He had tried to keep things with Loki professional, but when you talk about the things they had, it was not really possible. The truth was that he was already attached. Loki was as close to a best friend as he could get right now. Steve had shared things with him that he had only told Bucky and he knew that if Loki walked away at the end of this without looking back, he might break just a little more.

Loki stirred and opened his eyes. He sat up slowly and looked about him. "Steve, what's going on?"

"Do you remember going to lunch with Sam?" Steve replied.

Loki nodded slowly. "Yes, Sam was worried about something, wanted us to leave immediately. Then someone shouted at me. It is difficult to remember after that, I fear."

Steve was glad that there wasn't any real damage. "You got spotted and it has attracted a lot of attention. Someone threw a stone which hit you in the head. Sam pulled you away and you teleported the pair of you back here before things got worse, but people know you're here now. I've got someone who will hopefully smooth things over."

Loki looked very concerned of the situation. "I am sorry if my actions have led to difficulties for you. It would have been better for me to remain here."

"No you didn't know this would happen. We would have had to tell people you were here in the end, it just would have been better for us to have control of the timing, but it can't be helped."

Loki didn't look convinced but said nothing. He had expected to see Thor at his bedside but was oddly happier that it was Steve instead. This was a dreadful mess and he was to blame, but he trusted that Steve would see the Avengers through.

The Press conference was scheduled for the following day and Steve was going over what he was going to say. It wasn't good. "You kidding, right. This is a rant on how much we hate Loki but have to put up with him for reasons that are classified. I tell you now, there is not a chance of me saying any of that."

Miss Jacobs the PR rolled her eyes. “This is what has been agreed by all parties apart from you. This is the only way you get to keep him here. If you don’t agree to this, the State of New York will bring charges against your guest for War Crimes against the human race. It’s up you.”

Steve glared at her. “Just go away and let me look at this.”

Miss Jacobs shook her head. She had been warned that the Avengers had become fond of the animal in their mist. She couldn’t say anything out loud but she hoped that the Captain refused as that would mean Loki would get his just desserts. She left Steve to his thoughts.

Steve sat alone for a while, knowing that he had very little choice in the matter. He had already spent most of the morning dealing with calls from members of every branch of the military, the FBI, the CIA and every one in between as well as officials from other countries. Most simply wanted a piece of Loki to hang on their wall, but there were those such as General Ross who wanted more.

The general was still persisting in recreating the super soldier programme. He had insisted that Loki would be perfect to be used as a base line as he shared so many of Steve physical characteristics and demanded that he was handed over to his facility for study. Steve had read the reports of Ross’s activities from SHIELD and informed that General, politely, that given his track record and how he had treated Bruce, he wouldn’t have Loki within a 100 miles of his labs not matter what the situation.

Steve eyes dropped to the speech in front of him again. He knew there was one person he needed to talk to about this before he made a firm decision. He stood and headed to Loki’s room. Loki was fully recovered, but felt it best to stay out of the way until things settled down. Steve knocked and the door opened. Loki saw the look on his friend’s face and knew that things weren’t getting any better.

Steve held out the speech to Loki. Loki took it without a word and read it. He paled as his eyes travelled down the page. It wasn’t very flattering toward him. The line they were going with it seems was that he had been sent from Asgard to spend the rest of his days as some sort of slave and the Avengers were going to be using him as cannon fodder.

“And who will be reading this string of lies?” Said Loki, fearing the answer.

As he expected, Steve replied. “Me”

They sat in silence for a moment. Steve took the paper back then said. “This is what it will take to make sure you stay here. It’s this, prison or something much worse. If you ask me too, I will stand up and tell them what they want to know, if you want to stay. If not or you would rather I didn’t say any of this, Thor and I will find a way to get you away from here to somewhere safe.”

“Steve, I am bound to this Realm by the Norns and the only place in this Realm I will be safe is with the Avengers. Say what you must.”

Steve stood but instead of leaving, he put a hand on Loki’s shoulder. “Whatever happens, I don’t mean any of this. Please don’t hate me at the end of this.”

“I could never hate you, Steve, you are the one true friend I have in the universe.”

The Avengers press room was filled to capacity. Steve had never understood why Tony had furnished one, now he was glad. He doubted he could have been able to do this without being able to walk away at the end into the comfortable presence of the other Avengers.

Miss Jacobs announced him. He had insisted that he wasn't answering any questions, he wasn't sure he could lie on the spot anyway. He walked to the podium, cleared his throat and began.

"8 weeks ago, the Avengers, as the representatives of Earth to Asgard, were approached by Thor, to allow the War Criminal Loki to carry out his sentence for his crimes"

Steve walked off the stage at the end of the speech without a word. He hated himself and he needed to be alone. He headed to his quarters but met Loki leaving the communications room. Steve had removed Loki's restrictions. If he was going to work with them, he needed to be able to move around freely. Steve could tell by the look in his eyes, he had seen the broadcast.

"Loki, are you ok?" Steve asked.

Loki didn't answer the question, saying instead "You were convincing. It was very believable."

"I wish it wasn't. I wish they could tell that everything I was saying was tripe."

"It is not the case I fear. You missed your calling. You should consider the theatre if you wish a career without risking your life." Loki said trying to lighten the mood. Steve decided to follow suit.

"I was an actor in the 1940's. It was between being a lab rat and my personal mission to take out Hydra. I think Tony's still got some of the movies I made, if you want to laugh at me." Steve replied laughing himself at the idea. He realized what he really needed right now. "Swim?"

Loki nodded and the pair turned, heading to the Gym.

Chapter End Notes

I didn't really want to drag out the speech so I only did the first line. think there was enough in the lead up to get the idea of what it would say.

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Loki starts working in the field with the team

Things settled down in the end. Given Loki's apparent status as the Avengers skivvy and the fact that he made no more appearances on the streets of New York, the story lost interest. Loki was only news when he was evil. There was still the odd report demanding his trial but they were drawing little attention. Now that heat had died down, Steve had asked Miss Jacob's politely to leave. He wasn't blind, he could tell how she felt about Loki from the speech she wrote and didn't want to give her the chance to express her feelings to Loki himself. The team were now keen for Loki to start working for them to prove to everyone that he was willing to make amends for the past.

The first mission Loki joined was against a small Hydra cell which had just reared its head. Their slogan was right, there was always another head to take the place of the last. As long as one high ranking Hydra member was around, they simple recruited like-minded people and set up a new cell. Steve was also convinced that there were still sympathisers in the Government too, but it was proving it.

The mission was straight forward. Stave, Natasha and Thor were dealing with ground troops, Sam and Rhodey were providing air cover and Wanda and Loki were creating distractions, Loki with his illusions and Wanda was trapping the Hydra operatives inside their own minds. Much to Steve's irritation, Loki continued to wear his Asgard armour. It wasn't as if he was in the heart of the fight anyway and it seems there was still things from Asgard he wasn't prepared to let go no matter what he said. The armour represented all of those things.

Loki had a good view of the battle. It was almost done and Loki was surprisingly satisfied with being part of the team. He teleported next to Steve and his brother as they were mopping up the last of the foot soldiers.

His attention was caught by movement in the trees. In the space of a few seconds, a gunman hiding from sight raised his gun and shot at Natasha. Loki didn't think, he jumped forward. The bullet hit him from behind as he wrapped his arms around the Black Widow. The pain exploded in his upper back and chest and it suddenly became very hard to breath. He was only vaguely aware of Natasha lowering him gently to the floor and her calling to Steve and Thor. As he slipped into the blackness, someone took his hand and held it tight.

Loki eyes opened. He was starting to dislike the Medbay. Dr Cho, noticing him waking up, came over and started checking his vitals.

"Hello again. There are better ways to visit me, you know. Ok how do you feel?" The doctor

asked.

“Sore. Was the Widow harmed?” Loki asked.

“No, she’s fine. They were all here a few hours ago but I’ve had to ban them until you woke up. Now we’ve had to open you up as the bullet was lodged in your lung. Your brother wasn’t that keen on me using the cradle on you, but as you are healing rapidly in your own, it hasn’t made much difference. Looking at your stats you should be out of here tomorrow.”

“Thank you Doctor.” Said Loki settling back on the bed.

Thor was the first to be allowed in, desperate to ensure his brother wasn’t permanently harmed. Natasha stood by the door and nodded. There was no need for words, there was an understanding between the two of them now. Steve was the last to see him and was the one Loki was dreading.

“Ok, what were you playing at? I thought we were past the whole death wish thing or did you think if you tried to save Natasha’s life you would get your immortality back quicker.” Steve ranted. Loki felt his anger raise a little.

“It was none of those things. I simply wished to prevent her getting hurt.” Loki replied sharply.

“You didn’t have any protection; you don’t take risks that that.” Steve pushed.

“My life is no greater then hers. Why do you place more value on me then her?”

“It not about value, it’s.....It’s.....Hell” and Steve stormed off.

Dr Cho realised Loki for the Medbay the following evening and he made his way to his room. Steve hadn’t returned to the Medbay and Loki could only assume that he had really upset the other man, how he wasn’t sure. He had done what he had been ordered and he had protected a member of the team. Surly that was want he was meant to do.

The room was warm and Loki was just thinking of sleep when there was a knock on the door. Thinking it was Thor, Loki opened it. It was Steve and he had a bottle in his hand.

Steve held up the bottle, which was filled with a deep brown liquid. “An apology. It a bottle of 100% proof scotch, which Tony told me might get me tipsy and seeing as you have the same metabolism as me, I imaging you can’t get drunk very easily either. I was wondering if you wanted a night cap.”

Loki looked at the drink then nodded, letting Steve into the room. The room wasn’t large and there was only one office chair so Loki made the unused desk vanish and summoned two small bean bags, with a small table and glasses. Steve should have been surprised, but everyone had gotten used to Loki’s magic by now. Steve slumped down into one of the bean bags. The last few days worrying about Loki had taken its toll on him and he was tired.

He opened the bottle and poured the drinks. Before he tried the scotch, he looked at Loki. “Look it’s not that I value you over Nat. You are my team and it’s my job to keep you all safe, but her uniform is reinforced. The bullet would have done a lot less damage, that’s why I wanted you to wear something other than the leathers. They were fine when it was swords but this isn’t Asgard.”

Loki's recent experience lead him to agree. "Very well I will wear the uniform you provide, but I insist on my colours."

Loki looked down into the glass in his hand then said. "Steve, I no longer wish for my death, but in the heat of the moment, it slipped my mind how frail this body is. It never occurred to me that I was putting myself in real dangers from my actions."

Steve shock his head, realization dawning on him. "God, I'm sorry. I didn't think of that. I guess we all need to remember that a lot has changed since you showed up here. Now let's see if this stuff does its job."

With that Steve knocked back the Scotch. It burnt on the way down, but he could already tell it would have no real effect on him. He looked at Loki, who seemed the thinking the same thing.

"Steve, I have a drink that should get us both merry if you wish." Loki said.

Steve shrugged. "I'll give it a go."

Loki summoned a small bottle, which had a pale pink liquid inside. "This is Elvan fire brandy. It is very potent."

Loki poured a small amount into the scotch in each glass. Steve raised an eyebrow but took a sip. He felt the effects instantly as he became very light headed. There was a warmth flowing through his limbs and he felt more relaxed. This was what he has missed, not the getting drunk, but the relaxation. He took another drink and sip by sip the world faded away from him.

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Loki and Steve wake to a interesting turn of events

Loki woke with a start. The room was dark. He was in his bed but he didn't remember going to sleep. He was trying to remember what happened. He had been drinking and laughing with Steve. There was something important in the back of his mind that refused to surface. Then there was a groan next to him and up popped the memory. Him and Steve kissing.

Loki shot up pulling the sheet tighter around him. Then he realised that he was still dressed or at least in briefs and T-Shirt. The movement disturbed the body next to him and Steve's arm slipped around his waist tugging him back to the bed and in close.

Loki was confused. "Steve, what...?" He stammered.

Steve placed a kiss on the back of Loki's head. He was clearly not fully awake. "Shhhhhh. Sleep, we'll talk in the morning."

Steve settled back to sleep in seconds. Loki found he couldn't. Where had this come from? He would never deny that he found Steve a prime example of mortal perfection, he had eyes, but he hadn't until this moment considered taking the mortal into his bed. Now he led there wondering why he hadn't done it before. It dawned on him that he was very attracted to Steve, that he wanted him, had always wanted him and it was part of the reason the two of them had become so close. The ideas that were running through his head were making it very difficult not to wake Steve up and experiment. Sleep was dragging him down again and the last thing Loki thought was hoping that Steve didn't regret what happened between them in the morning.

Steve woke first this time. Loki had turned and nestled in close to his chest. Steve was sure he had never seen anything more adorable. He just wished he could have this all the time. He wasn't surprise as Loki had been, the alcohol hadn't caused him forget what had happened between them, it had simply opened his mind to the truth of what he wanted and gave him the courage to take it. The only problem was, it was something he couldn't have.

Steve reluctantly pulled away from the other man and shuffled to the edge of the bed. He knew he should have left earlier when Loki had woken, but he wanted to make the only time he could be this way with Loki last as long as possible. He still had his pants on so he searched the floor for his shirt. He was just pulling it on when a hand rested on his shoulder.

"Where are you going?" asked Loki softly as if not wishing to disturb someone who wasn't there.

"I need to go. I should never have let this happen. I'm sorry I didn't mean to take advantage of you, it won't happen again." Steve said sorrowfully. He couldn't look at Loki. His resolve was unlikely to last if he did.

"Steve, what are you taking about? I don't think we did anything which would merit taking

advantage of anyone.” Loki’s hand gripped Steve’s shoulder a little more.

“That’s good. We can’t do this, we’re a team, I’m your leader and you’re here under my protection. We can be friends but that’s it. I’m so sorry.” Before Loki could say anything else, Steve stood and left as quickly as he could, leaving Loki feeling hurt and more than a little angry.

Steve was back in front of the punch bags. He hadn’t needed this kind of distraction for a while, but then he normally talked to Loki when things got to him, which currently wasn’t an option. Steve didn’t know when his feelings became more than friendship, in fact until last night, he had no idea they had.

Memories from the night before filled his mind. Loki laughing at something he had said, them both reaching for something, them both ending up in a heap on the floor for some reason, the almost shy look in Loki’s eyes as Steve looked down at him. He had no clue how the kissing started but the one thing he was certain of was that he would give anything to do it again.

As the third bag disintegrated under his assault, Steve tried to figure out how he got in this position. He has always liked women. Before the serum they hadn’t liked him very much, but after he had his pick. Of course Peggy had always been the focus of his attention before the ice and for a little while after. He had tired with a few girls, but he had always held back on full relationships given the nature of his work. He had never looked at another man before. Now he had kissed Loki, had kissed him a lot and was wishing he could do more. He hung up the next bag, trying to think how he was going to find a way back to the way things had been before with Loki, if that was even possible.

10min later Sam, Rhodey, Natasha and Thor arrived for the morning workout. Thor greeted him pleasantly, so Steve guessed he hadn’t seen Loki this morning. Sam however spotted the punch bags and raised an eyebrow. Steve refused to meet his eye, guessing what was going through his friend’s head.

Steve was just setting up the pairs for sparring, when Loki entered the gym. Loki had never joined in the group training, always preferring to be alone or with Steve or Thor. He said nothing but was dressed for the workout so Steve paired him with Sam. Loki floored Sam quickly (with a little help from his magic) and then placed himself firmly in front of Steve, challenging him.

Everyone else in the room could feel the tension was building, but couldn’t understand what was going on. Something had changed between the two of them, something big and even Thor was hesitant about interfering. Steve and Loki eyed each other for a moment before Steve nodded to the mat.

They circled each other for a minute before Loki said “You can’t ignore me. I know what you want.”

Steve glanced around before he answered “What I want isn’t important. Things can’t be that way.”

“Why? Are you ashamed of what you want or is it me? You wouldn’t be the first.” Loki replied, sarcasm dripping from his tone.

Steve lunged at Loki, but Loki knew his style as well as he knew his own and dodged. The other Avengers had been forgotten.

“Why should I be ashamed of you? I just can’t abuse my position in charge of the Avengers. How

do I know it is what you want and not something you feel obliged to do out of gratitude?”

Loki fainted then made a grab for Steve catching his arm and pinned it behind his back. Steve grunted in pain loud enough to concern the watchers.

“Loki.” Thor said in a warning tone. He tried to get closer but found his way blocked by Loki’s shield. “Loki, stop this. What is going on?”

Loki glared at Thor and ignored the question. He spoke to Steve instead. “You still don’t know me very well. I don’t do anything unless I want to and I want this.”

“And what about your state of mind? How can I be sure that you can have a health relationship with anybody right now?” Steve asked through gritted teeth.

“I don’t wish to be with anybody, I wish to be with you. You know all my failings and my pain just as I know yours. There are worse beginnings.”

Steve slipped his foot behind Loki’s ankle and pulled, causing Loki to fall back. The shock made Loki loosen his grip enough for Steve to break free. He turned hoping to pin Loki to the ground, but Loki had been ready, using his own leg to trip Steve. Steve hit the ground and found Loki on top of him. Before the other man got another grip, Steve bucked his lower body and rolled them. They ended up with Steve on top, his legs straggling Loki’s hips and Loki hands pinned by his head. From where he was sat, Steve could feel Loki’s erection and there was no way he could hide his own. Steve also knew he had lost. He looked down at Loki.

“This is going to make things 10 times harder, you know that, right?”

Loki nodded, a small smile beginning on his lips.

Steve released Loki hands and leant forward getting closer to Loki’s face. “Whatever happens with this, in the field we don’t exist, we do the job and take the risks we need to. I can’t play favourites even for you.”

Loki nodded again. He had expected nothing less from Steve, especially after he knew the true reasons for his restraint.

Steve lowered his head again until their foreheads touched. The rest of the world had vanished. “I know I can’t ask you for forever but if we’re in this, we’re in it all the way at least until those fates of yours show up again. If you want someone else, it’s them or me.”

Loki raised his hand and stroked Steve’s cheek. “I can’t not make you many promises, but there will be no one else while we are one that I swear.”

Steve sighed contently before he leaned in the final distance and kissed Loki. Loki wrapped his arms around Steve’s back and drew him closer, until their chests were pressed together. From what they remembered, the last time had been wet, sloppy and rushed. This kiss was slow, tender and so much better.

The rest of the Avengers looked bewildered. When they realised what they were watching was foreplay, they made a hasty retreat. They didn’t say a word but all agreed with looks to talk to the pair making out in the gym later, much later.

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Natasha and Thor have their say on the new couple

Steve finally dragged Loki from the gym a short while later, having kissed and talked about their relationship some more (more kissing, not a lot of talking). The one thing they agreed on was that neither of them were willing to consider taking their relationship to a more intimate level until they were both comfortable with the changes that had already happened. Of course they would have rather spent some time alone together, preferably away from the headquarters while they were getting comfortable but that was a luxury they didn't have right now. Both had work that needed to be done.

Steve was meant to be seeing the computer experts who were decrypting the information they had pulled from the Hydra computers. Most of it had been corrupted but Steve hoped they would find something.

Wanda had finally approached Loki about training her in her abilities. Loki had agreed, mostly as a precaution. Wanda's powers were driven by her emotions and while that made them stronger, it also made them unpredictable. The fact that her powers were induced by the Sceptre hadn't helped matters either. Loki was certain she would benefit from learning to focus and control what she had better before he taught her anything new, so that was where he was going to start.

Steve walked into his office to see Natasha sitting there waiting for him. He knew this was coming and decided it was better to get it out of the way now rather than leave her to get more wound up by the situation.

"What part of 'don't get attached' did you misunderstand, Steve. How long have you and he been involved?" Natasha asked, straight to the point as always.

Steve calmly sat at his desk, then looked at his watch. "About 12 hours or so and the advice was a little late. I may not have realised it but this hasn't happened over night, it's been coming for a while."

Natasha was kicking herself for not seeing it sooner. She had talked to Sam about it and he didn't seem all that surprised and was actually pleased. Natasha however was less so. "Ok, well this is new, so you need to stop it now before you get in too deep. Steve, Loki is going to hurt you, not today, not tomorrow but it will happen."

"You have just seen what happened when I tried this morning and to be honest now I know it is what he wants, I don't want to stop either." Steve shook his head. He stood and moved to the other side of the desk and sat on it. "Nat, both he and I know that Loki leaving is a very real possibility. We have no idea what will be expected of him if he does whatever he is meant to do. If he does have to leave, I will deal with that if and when it happens but for now we are going to simply be together. It's got as much chance of working out as all those dates you tried to set me up on, more even. At least I don't have to hide anything from him or worry about him not being able to look after himself if someone went after him. I know it's a lot to take in, hell I'm still catching up and I'm in the middle of it, but I know this is what I want. Trust me."

Natasha sighed. Maybe he was right. Loki had certainly proved that he could be trusted in the field and from what she had been told, Loki hadn't made Steve any promises that he would stay. Steve certainly deserved the chance of a little happiness and if Loki was who he wanted, who was Natasha to judge. She had fallen for the Hulk after all.

Thor was also waiting for Loki in his room and he was even less agreeable than Natasha, in fact he was downright angry. He pounced the second his Brother entered the room.

"Loki, what foolishness is this? The Captain is a good man and I do not wish you to play with his feelings if you are bored." Thor growled, trying not to sound too accusing and failing miserably.

"Thor, does it never occur to you that there are times while my motives may be selfish, they are not intended for harm. I have great affection for Steve and as I am keen for him to stay my lover, it would not serve my interests to see him hurt. I have told him no lies and made no promises. The rest I think is none of your or anyone else's business." Loki replied calmly.

"I have seen you with lovers before. You have never shown any interest in men, and in few women. Those you have, have rarely ended well and you have dismissed many women without a second thought. How can you tell me Steve will be any different?" Thor said. He couldn't hide his concern.

"At least I was successful in my endeavours. It is simple. I was a member of the royal family, I was expected to pursue the ladies at court, to play with their hearts as you did. How would it have looked if it was known that I preferred men? It was hard enough living under Odin's boot without the shame he would have directed at me. So I did what I did best, I hid behind a lie, denied myself everything that would have made me truly happy. Now I am free and have every intention of getting what I desire, especially as those desires are shared by my Captain." Loki stared at Thor, waiting for his reaction. He had never been as vocal as many on Asgard at their disgust at those like Loki.

Thor wasn't ignorant to the fact that some men found pleasure with each other. He had never been interested himself, but had kept what he knew to himself, knowing that those in question would face ridicule if the truth was known. For Thor, it wasn't that Loki favoured men that hurt, it was the fact that he had kept it hidden from him. They had shared everything together in their younger years. Still that was the past and he would not shy away from Loki now.

"Loki, if you truly care for the Captain, then I have no objections. I warn you do not hurt him and you can tell him from me that if he hurts you, I shall rip his heart out."

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Loki and Steve talk again about their relationship

Steve and Loki made it through the day without too much trouble, despite being quizzed by every Avenger in turn. Sam had given Loki a pat on the back. He was happy that the pair of them were happy with each other and that was the only important thing to him. Rhodey didn't really know either as well as the others and didn't think it was his place to comment, but he did point out to Steve that it would put Loki back on the front page if the public found out. Wanda it seems had known of the attraction from the hints she had picked up from each of their subconscious minds. (She never looked deliberately but the stray thoughts often slipped past her defences.) Vision remained silent of the matter, but based on his earlier comments, Loki was sure he didn't disapprove.

Steve knocked on Loki's door later that evening, but found there was no answer and Steve was suddenly reluctant to just walk in. It hadn't bother him when Loki first arrived but now he felt that he needed Loki to say it was ok for him enter unannounced. After there was no reply from the 3rd knock, Steve sighed unhappily and headed to his own rooms.

Tony clearly wanted to make the point that the Avengers were in charge and their living quarter reflected that. Theirs and some of the other key personal, were small suites. Each had a separate bed room and bath room as well as enough room for a sitting area and office space. The rest of the accommodation was like Loki's, only room for the double bed, the required storage and the office. Steve hadn't been too happy when he found this out and had considered moving in to one of the smaller rooms to prove a point. However, his rarely seen selfishness kicked in a little. The only thing he really missed about living in the Avengers Tower was the space. He had had a whole floor to himself and even the larger quarters felt cramped. He knew he could never cope in the shoe boxes and so had kept his room.

He had only been in his room a minute before there was knock at his door.

"Come in." he shouted as he went into the bedroom to strip off his shirt. He came back to see Loki standing there, eyes wide as they run across Steve's naked chest. He liked what he saw, of that much Steve was certain.

"Hey" was all Steve could think to say, in a soft welcoming tone. He walked over to Loki, cupped his face in his hands and kissed him. Loki's hand ran down Steve chest slowly, outlining his muscles with his fingers.

"I don't think I will ever tire of this. If only I had known what I would be missing, I would have whisked you away from the Gala the second I first saw you." mused Loki as they broke apart.

"You would have had a bit of a fight on your hands. I didn't really like you then." Replied Steve, his hands running down the other man's arms to meet his hands. They talked about the first time they faced each other before. They had reached a point where it was a fact of life for them. There

were no recriminations. It was what happened and that was that.

“True, but I think you would have come around in the end and maybe we would have saved a lot of heartache. It certainly would have saved lives. Even then you would have been good for me.” Only Steve knew how much Loki regretted his actions on Earth. Jotunheim and Asgard were a different story and Steve didn’t pry.

Loki, his hand firmly in Steve’s, pulled him over to the small sofa. As much as he wanted to carry on where they left off in the gym, Loki still needed to be sure that Steve wasn’t going to back out on him again. They settled comfortably with Steve’s head in Loki’s lap.

"Steve, you are happy with this? I know I may have been forceful in my suit, but I will not pursue this if you feel you have been unduly pressured. Sam told me you have never taken a man as a lover before as far as he knew." Loki asked all the while playing with Steve’s hair.

Steve couldn’t say he was pleased that Sam was passing comments on his sexuality, he hadn’t known the guy that long. Still he couldn’t deny it was true.

“Up till now, I’ve only been with a few girls, the job hasn’t helped much with dating and yes I’m not interested in men. I’m interested in you, there is something about Loki the ex-prince of Asgard which I can’t get off my mind. And yes I am happy with this. I may have been uncomfortable about it this morning but you know the reasons for that. What about you, you’ve never really talked about relationships before other than your family. Was there anyone on Asgard?”

“No. I prefer men, always have but it is seen as not fitting behaviour for a warrior and prince, so I couldn’t take the risk of being discovered, and it would seem I simply stopped noticing attractive men as a result. Like yourself, I dallied with a few ladies at court, but never seriously, more to hide the truth.” Loki said, again in a very matter of fact way. He had Steve now, so regret over Asgard was pointless. “By the way, Thor has given his blessing but he has asked me to tell you that he will rip your heart out if you hurt me.”

Steve laughed. He hadn’t really been bothered if Thor had been happy about them or not, but it was nice to know that he wouldn’t have to defend himself to the Thunderer.

“Well Natasha has tried to warm me off you, but I think I’ve talked her round. The others don’t seem too bothered. Sam and Wanda had an idea anyway, I think.” Steve decided he had enough talking and with a hand on Loki’s neck, pulled him down for a kiss. It started slow but soon became heated and almost out of control so Loki pulled away again.

“I thought we were going to get used to the idea of the two of us before we went any further.” Loki asked, even though his body was demanding more.

Steve sat up and turned to face Loki. “I know. It’s just when I look at you.....It’s hard.”

“It is a feeling shared, I assure you. I do believe when we take that step, it will be worth the wait, my Captain.”

Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

Steve and Loki relationship comes out on the open and they deal with the fallout

Loki and Steve neither advertised their new relationship nor hid it from the rest of the staff. For the first week, only the Avengers and what was known as the inner circle (Erik, Jane and Dr Cho) knew what was going on. Still, slowly people began to notice the little things that had changed. Before Loki always ate his meals at the same time and Steve would join him when he could. Now Loki was always in the mess when Steve was available to eat. They had always been close but never overly physical around others. Now there were touches, hands, arms, nothing inappropriate but still consent.

Of course, everyone noticed that Loki had started visiting Steve's quarters, something he had never done before. It was an unspoken rule that it was the one place where Steve was left alone in peace. Only Natasha got to go in there when she needed to and now Loki seemed to spend most of his evenings there. He never slept there thought, that was the only certainty. Still it raised eyebrows. If there was something romantic between them, surly they would be sleeping together

The truth didn't come out until after a mission almost a month later. The was up against former test subjects of AIM who had slipped passed Tony and the fight had resulted in Steve getting pretty bangs up. He had been slammed through a wall made from reinforced concrete and when they found him he had multiple internal injuries and damage to the ligaments and tendons in his leg. Like Thor, Steve wasn't happy about Dr Cho's cradle and preferred to heal on his own, so when they got him back to the HQ, he was rushed straight into surgery. It was mostly just ensuring that there were no pieces of the wall in his wounds which might complicate his recovery.

Once Steve was in recovery, Loki refused to leave his side. He held his hand, not giving a dam who may be watching.

Steve awoke after a few hours, sore and weak but alive and Loki had to hold himself back from crushing Steve in his arms. He did press a soft kiss to Steve lips, ignoring the gasps from the staff in the room.

"Hey" Steve said softly after Loki pulled away.

"Steve, it would not be wise to die on me. I would take it very personally." Said Loki trying to keep things light, but unable to hide the worry in his eyes.

"I think I might have been a little miffed myself" Replied Steve coughing a little. "The same goes for you, ok."

Loki nodded, relived that Steve was going to be ok. He would be off his feet for a few days, but he would make a full recovery and be out risking his life again before long. With this in mind, Loki had made a decision.

“I’m not waiting anymore. When you are well enough, I am coming to your bed. Today could have been our last day and I would know all of you before that day comes.” Loki held Steve’s hand tighter in an attempt not to let his emotions get the better of him.

Steve would have argued had he not already been thinking along the same lines. The pair had both ended up in Medbay recently with injuries that could have killed them if not for the enhancements they had been given by the Serum and the Norns. Next time things could be worse and one of them might not make it. So he nodded, raised Loki’s hand to his face and kissed it, his eyes never leaving his lover’s.

The rumour mill went mad. There was now eye witness reports of Steve and Loki being clearly involved and the line was drawn. Most trusted Steve and while they may not like Loki, they were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt as he had done nothing but help since he arrived and Steve would never fall for someone who was up to no good.

There were still the few who felt that either Loki had Steve under some sort of spell or that Steve had simply betrayed everything he stood for.

Those in the former group hounded Natasha for answers. She did her best to reassure people that Steve was not only in control of his own mind, but also Loki wasn’t controlling anyone. It was decided informally to take the wait and see approach.

Those in the latter group left, unable to work for a group which had seemed to become corrupted by the God of Evil. Their loyalty stretched to not running to the newspapers with this new story. Most went to Coulson, who wasn’t happy with the new development either but trusted Steve to keep his head.

Barton sent Steve an angry email, the first communication he had received from the archer since Loki had arrived. Like many others, Clint felt Steve had betrayed him and resigned from the Avengers. Natasha went to try and see him but he refused even her. This hurt Steve more than all the others leaving and the guilt weighed down on him. This was the price for his happiness with Loki and if it hadn’t been for the Avengers around him, reassuring him that he had made the right choice in allowing Loki to stay, that he was allowed to be with Loki if that was what the pair wanted, he was sure he would have given Loki up to keep the peace.

Much to Steve relief, slowly the people that remained began to accept that the relationship wasn’t a bad thing. It helped that Steve and Loki maintained a professional, if close attitude in the public eye, not wishing to make things harder on those uncomfortable with the situation. Slowly, normality returned.

Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

Smut!!!

Chapter Notes

This chapter is has the sexual content for the story. For those who aren't in to that, the next chapter will be posted tomorrow.

This takes place during the end of the last Chapter

Steve was released from the Medbay after four days, his internal injuries almost completely healed and apart from a slight limp, you wouldn't have known he'd had any problems with his leg. Loki was at his side as always and the pair walked slowly to his quarters. Once there, Loki settled Steve, sitting on his bed and after kissing him on the forehead, made to leave so he could rest. Steve however grabbed his hand.

"Stay. You said you would." He said, both knowing full well what he was really asking.

"Steve, I said when you were well enough, it's only been 4 days." His argument wasn't entirely convincing

"And I heal quickly. Please, we could be back out on a mission tomorrow. Stay with me, move your things in here. I'm not sure I can stand being away from you at night, seeing as you've just spent the last four in the Medbay with me." Steve asked just on the side of pleading where he kept his self-respect. Loki had insisted on watching over Steve and had slept on a cot next to the bed.

Loki thought for a moment. It had been hard to turn away to leave and he couldn't resist the need in his Captain's eyes. Still, the sharing of living space, it was a very big statement, not just between themselves but to everyone.

"Very well, I shall stay, but you are doing nothing strenuous. Lie back and enjoy what I will do to you."

Steve's eyes went wide. He had read a little on what they could and couldn't do together and had been keen to try some of it with Loki, but even though he had asked, now faced with the actually doing, he got apprehensive.

Loki could tell what was running through Steve's mind and quickly came in to kiss him. While he never done anything with another man before, he had done plenty on his own and knew how to make it enjoyable for both of them. He pulled away after a minute and said "We do only what you are happy with. I won't hurt you."

Steve swallowed. "I want it all, all of you. No holding back, please. I want you, Loki."

“Then you shall have me, my Captain.” And Loki kissed him again, his tongue slipping inside Steve’s mouth.

Loki started by slowly stripping Steve and then himself. They had been naked in front of each other before in the showers, but never like this, never with the burning desire that was setting their blood on fire. Steve hands moved along Loki’s skin on his back and couldn’t believe how smooth it was. He could feel the lean muscles underneath and wondered at the utter physical perfection of the man.

Loki was busying himself exploring Steve’s neck, running his tongue along his jawline and nipping at his pules point. His attentions made Steve moan wantonly, so he knew he was doing something right. He started to move lower down to Steve nipples. He licked and sucked first one then the other, making them sensitive. Steve fisted his hands in Loki’s hair pulling gently and it was Loki’s turn to moan.

Loki came back up to Steve mouth and kissed him again. Steve tried to roll them, but Loki pressed down on his shoulders. “No, I am in charge. Relax, my sweet.”

Steve wasn’t use to not being in control, but he knew if there any future for him and Loki, he needed to trust Loki and this was the first real test of that trust. So Steve lay back and trusted Loki to look after him.

Loki dropped down Steve’s body to his cock, which was hard and ready for him. He kissed and nipped the sensitive skin inside of Steve’s thighs and had him moaning again before he swallowed Steve down whole. Loki bobbed gently up and down of the shaft, aware that Steve was struggling hard not to buck up into his mouth. Loki slipped his hand behind him and using his magic to slick his fingers, slide them inside himself.

Loki was finding it difficult to focus as he pleased Steve and stretched himself at the same time, but somehow he managed and the second he was ready, he pulled his fingers out and come away from Steve. Steve whined at the loss of Loki’s month, but watched as Loki straddled his hips, lining Steve with his entrance. Steve, figuring out what he was meant to be doing, gripped onto Loki’s hips to steady him and together, they lowered Loki on to his cock.

This was a first for both of them and so they took it slow, easing Loki down inch by inch. Loki felt the burn as he was stretched even further around Steve. He couldn’t stop the hiss escaping from him and he felt Steve fingers tense on his skin. He rested his hand over Steve’s, hopefully reassuring him and continued until Steve was fully sheathed inside him. He took a moment to relax. Steve had never felt anything like this before, Loki was so tight, his inner walls smooth and hot, but he was still worried that it was too much too quick for his lover.

“Loki?” Steve asked, looking concerned. Loki smiled down at his lover and if Steve hadn’t already been in love, he was now, so in love it hurt. “Loki, I love you.”

Loki gasped in surprise, but didn’t reply. Instead he slowly lifted himself up and then back down again. Steve couldn’t help feeling disappointed that Loki didn’t seem to return his feelings yet, but he lost his ability to speak as Loki lifted and fell again and again, quickly falling into a gentle rhythm. Steve began to thrust upwards, meeting Loki as he dropped down again. As he did, he found Loki’s prostate and Loki took in a sharp breath. Steve taking it easy was forgotten as they moved in unison, their mutual pleasure washing over them and pushing them towards completion.

Loki finished first, without either of them touching him and his spill coating Steve’s chest. Steve,

driven forward by Loki's release followed quickly, spilling everything he had inside his lover. They were still as they came down from the high they were both on. Gingerly Loki lifted off, and rolled until he was settled next to Steve on the bed. Steve wrapped his arms around Loki, pulling him in and kissing the top of his head. Neither needed to say a word, there would be time to talk in the morning. Right now sleep was calling and they were both happy to answer as long as they were together.

The following day, Loki moved his things into Steve's room.

Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

Thor gets a visit from some old friends

Chapter Notes

Ok if you skipped the last Chapter, Steve and Loki relationship has now become physical and Loki has moved into Steve's quarters. During this, Steve has told Loki that he loves him, but Loki doesn't seem to return his feeling for the moment

Thor was relaxing with Jane for the first time in months. Loki was happier then Thor could ever remember and a happy Loki was unlikely to cause trouble. Not that there had been much trouble that was Loki's fault since he had arrived on Earth.

So Thor had finally felt able to move in to Jane's house rather than staying at the HQ. Now all he needed to do was stop thinking about what Loki got up to with Steve in their shared quarters, then he would be content.

Just as Thor was thinking how perfect the afternoon was, the phone rang. Jane looked up at Thor, sighed and reached for the receiver.

"Hello.....Hey Steve.....he'd here but please say it's really important because I've just got him to sit down.....ok. Here."

Jane handed of the phone to Thor. He rolled his eyes, hoping it had nothing to do with Loki. "Captain, how may I assist you?"

"You have visitors. A group called the Warriors 3 and the Lady Sif just landed on the Lawn through the Bifrost. Might want to get up here, big guy." Said Steve. There was something in Steve's tone, a tension as if he wasn't happy about this new turn of events, but Thor was too excited about his friends being on Earth again, he missed it.

"I understand. Tell my friends I shall be with them shortly and have Loki join us, he will be pleased, I'm sure." Thor put the receiver down and kissing Jane, made his way outside to fly back to HQ.

He arrived less than 10min later and soon found his friends in the large conference room. Loki could hear the rowdiness as he walked down the hall. When Steve told him that Thor had wanted him to see the friends again, he knew better than to refuse. Thor had never been able to accept that they were not Loki's friends. Only Fandral and Volstagg had ever made any effort to be agreeable.

Thor had just finished talking as he entered the room. "It is wonderful to see you, my friends but

why now and how did you get here? I can't see my father allowing you to come."

"Heimdall follows the Allfather's commands to the letter as per his Oath. So as Odin has not ordered him to prevent us from traveling to Earth, he allowed us access to the Bifrost. It is bad there Thor. The Allfather is beyond reason now. He rages against everyone near him. He has refused to follow the decree of the Norns and calls anyone who mentions your name traitor." Sif said. She then notices Loki for the first time. "Thor, what is he doing here? Should he not be locked up?"

Loki wasn't surprised by this reaction but Thor was. "Loki is serving the sentence as laid out by the Norns, there is no need to imprison him. Please, we were all blood brothers once. It is time to put the past aside."

Sif scoffed at the idea. "It is too late for that, Thor. Odin may be mad but he was right about somethings. Loki is to blame for much that has happened and he had tricked you more than once. The Norns may have deemed Odin's sentence too harsh, but he still shouldn't be free to spread his lies and you can't trust him."

Loki scanned the room. Sif's hate burned in her eyes. The others looked uncomfortable but Loki couldn't tell if it was because he was there or what Sif had said. Thor was livid. It didn't matter. He wasn't welcome here and he wouldn't going to stay where he wasn't wanted. He had heard enough, so he turned and stormed from the room.

Steve had known this was a bad idea and was waiting outside. He knew just how much of an outsider Loki had felt around Thor's friends. He went to take Loki in to his arms, but the look on his lover's face told him to stay back. Steve watched him leave and then went in to the conference room to see what went on. Thor was raging at his companions.

".....Loki saved us. He has suffered and has tried to make amends for the wrongs he has done, but it is still not enough for you. I see now why he turned his back on Asgard. Well, no more. He has earned not only my trust, but the trust of the Avengers and is worthy of your respect. If you can't do that, then expect nothing from me."

Steve couldn't believe this was Thor talking. He knew how much Thor loved his brother, but he had been always assumed that given a choice he would choose Asgard, he was the Prince after all. For the first time Steve realised that the choice had already been made and it was Loki. He wished that Loki had been here to hear it to.

Sif on the other hand looked mortified. "Thor, you don't mean this. Asgard needs you, you must return and try to reason to your father. You can't put your duty aside to help him when he isn't worth saving."

Thor opened his mouth to speak, but it was Fandral who spoke first. "That is enough, Sif. I agree with Thor. Would Thor have beaten the Malakith without Loki help, help he didn't need to give? We know he would not and Loki didn't misuse his time on the Throne. He made better decisions than Odin is now. Thor, I can't say I would ever take Loki into my confidence, but if he should return to Asgard, I will not shun him either."

Volstagg and Hogun both nodded in agreement. Sif found herself out numbered and so said nothing. Thor was still angry but was also grateful for Fandral's intervention.

Steve knew it was better not to say anything. Thor had made his point clear and there would be things about the situation on Asgard the group may wish to talk about in private. So he nodded to Thor, who acknowledged him with a grim smile, before he left to look for Loki.

Steve checked their room first and found it trashed. As neither had much in the way of trinkets and other personal effects, it was mostly ripped up clothes and papers thrown around. On closer inspection, Steve realised that everything that was damaged belonged to Loki. All Steve's belongs looked completely untouched. It didn't take long for Steve to tidy the mess and then headed to the second most likely place to find his wayward lover.

Steve hit the jackpot second time around as he heard a familiar sound as he entered the gym. Loki was standing by the punch bag, clearly trying to do an impersonation of Steve. He lacked Steve's procession and had only managed to break one bag so far.

"Hey" Steve said, coughing slightly. "You need to concentrate in one area. That tends to make them give out quicker."

Loki glanced over his shoulder, not seeming at all that surprised to see Steve standing behind him. He gave the bag a few more punches before sighing and giving up. "I wondered if this did any good."

"What do you think?"

"I think you wasted your time." Loki turned to face Steve "are they still here?"

"Thor is still talking them, but only after he yelled at Sif and Fandral had a pop at her too. I don't think the Warriors 3 are going to be your best friends, but they don't hate you either." Steve said, never taking his eyes from Loki face. "Thanks for the room by the way"

Loki looked embarrassed "Forgive me, my sweet. I let my anger get the better of me. I forget how immovable Asgard is. Here, for the most part, you allow people to become better and look at them the way they are now. There I shall ever be the monster, the Jotun who never knew his place. You will find that it is Sif not Fandral that reflects the truth of opinion."

Steve couldn't help feeling there was more to this than Sif's personal views on Loki. "Loki, are you sure that's all it is? There is nothing else bothering you."

Loki grimed a little. Either he had lost his touch at concealing his emotions or Steve knew him far too well to make concealing impossible. He hoped it was the latter. He wasn't keen on Thor being able to read him so easily. "You're right. I am used to Sif's disdain. It would seem that Odin has refused to meet the conditions set by the Norns and yet they have done nothing. I must live as a mortal, I have only one year to fulfil their terms, whatever they are and yet Odin is permitted to remain on the Throne having ignored his, which were spelt out for him. I can't help feeling that I am being treated unfairly."

"Hey, forget Odin. I'm sure he had a time-scale just like you did. Do you have any reason to think the Norns won't do as they say?" Asked Steve

"I simply don't know, Steve. I have never come across a time when the Norns have interfered like this." Loki answered, a worried look on his face.

Steve finally approached and put his arms around his lover. He pressed his lips to Loki's before saying "Well until we know either way, I think we keep on believing that when you earn what you need to make them happy, that they are going to keep their promise, ok."

Loki nodded, but now another thought struck him, one that worried him more than Sif and Odin combined.

Thor talked to his friends for hours but in the end found he could not return to Asgard. He was still banished and while the Norns had returned Mjolnir to him, that didn't mean he had the right to go home. He begged Fandral to keep him informed on the situation, who agreed (Sif was unhappy with him over Loki). Like Loki, Thor wondered that the Norns had left his father alone. It was his hope that they would continue to do so and would leave Loki alone too. The longer the pair were together, the more Thor was convinced that Loki's place was here at the side of Captain America and that would never work if Loki was no longer mortal.

Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

Loki's fears manifest themselves in his nightmares

Loki was standing in the throne room on Asgard again. The Norns were before him and behind them was his family and the Avengers, including Steve.

The Norns spoke as one again "Loki you have failed in this simple test. You had only to return to life all those you have killed, but that was clearly beyond you. So you will be stripped of your powers. You are weak and small and as a worm below a mortal's boot. Farewell."

Loki was surrounded by a bright light and felt the life that was his magic vanish. The light faded and now he was looking out at the crowd. Odin looked at him, gloating at Loki's failure, and looked that was matched by nearly everyone in the room. Thor's face was set in disappointment.

"You have shamed me, Brother." Thor said before turning away.

The Avengers didn't say anything, they simply followed Thor's example. All but Steve. He walked over to Loki. Loki felt a glimmer of hope. Steve would not abandon him.

"Loki, without your magic, you're of no use to me. I only slept with you so you wouldn't join someone else. It would be better if you left." And with that Steve shoved Loki back.

Loki fell and fell and fell. All of a sudden he felt the pull of the Void, only it wasn't empty as it was before. Now it was filled with faces and voices. Everyone he had ever hurt, all screaming at him, accusing him. It was deafening. Loki tried to shut his eyes and cover his ears but he couldn't. Many of the faces he didn't recognise, but he saw Barton, Selvig and Coulson among them. He tried to scream but his voice was still. Then the faces disappeared and were replaced by one, the one Loki feared more than any other in the universe.

Thanos stared at Loki, an evil look in his eye and grin on his face. "You are mine now. You will pray for death."

Loki shot up, straight into the open arms of Steve. He couldn't stop his body from shaking, such was the impact of the nightmare on him. He even felt a few tears slip down his cheeks.

Steve had woken with a start by Loki's screaming. Neither of them were strangers to bad dreams, but Loki had never screamed like that before. He had woken when Steve touched his arm and Steve was thankful for his reflexes as Loki jumped like he had been electrocuted.

"It's ok, it was a nightmare, it wasn't real." Steve said trying to reassure Loki.

"It could be." Loki whispered under his breath. Steve still heard.

"Loki, look at me." said Steve gently. Loki raised his face and Steve saw something he had never expected. Loki looked like he didn't trust him. "Loki, what is it? What's the matter? Tell me

please, you're scaring me."

"What happens when I'm useless to you? What happens when the Norns take my magic and I can't help you?" Asked Loki, hurt slipping in.

Steve was surprised at the question. He had thought all time about what would happen when Loki was Jotun again, it never occurred to him that it might not happen.

"I don't know. If it did happen, I guess you could still come on missions if they leave your physical condition alone. Your hand to hand is pretty good now. Or there is plenty you could do here. You would be an asset to Erik or Dr. Cho, once you were up to speed on the science. Or you could just live here, there is nothing to say you have to do anything. It would be up to you."

Suddenly it dawned on Steve what was worrying Loki. "Loki, you don't ever think that you have to have your magic to stay here. You are part of the team, you belong here and I will never turn you away, I love you."

Loki looked into Steve's eyes and knew that he meant every word he said. Slowly his fears about his lover faded away and he melted into Steve's arms, wishing that he never had to leave them. Still, his fears for his future still remained and no matter Steve's intentions, the final decision may be out of both their hands.

Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

Loki is given a mission

Chapter Notes

We have skipped forward a few months. Loki has been doing everything he can think of the help but has had nothing from the Norns

10 months after Loki first arrived, Steve finally decided it was safe for them to take the promised visit to Brooklyn. People had seen Loki in the field, helping the Avengers and slowly public opinion had started swing of his favour. There had even been a positive newspaper report. He was still looked at as a criminal but the questions stopped being ‘when he was going to betray the Avengers’, to ‘what would it take to pay for his crimes’.

So Steve took the chance to show Loki the places where he grew up. They were still careful. Loki had his hair tied up and covered by a cap. It wasn’t the best disguise but there wasn’t much more they could do.

They spent most of the morning seeing all the hunts from Steve’s childhood or at least what was left of them. Steve laughed at the plaque that had been put up on a building that had replaced Steve old house. They went to the shop where the SSR lab was located. It had changed and was now a fashionable boutique.

Loki watched Steve walk through the places from his memories, showing Loki a small piece of his past, like looked into his soul. Loki couldn’t help wishing he could do the same. The it wasn’t about wither they were good or bad memories; it was opening the part of yourself to another person. Loki could also tell that Steve was keeping his eyes open, hoping to chance sight of Bucky, Steve was convinced that he would return here someday.

The last stop was the local grave yard. Steve had bought a small bunch of flowers and was taking them to his mother’s grave. The Stone was worn badly, but they could still see the name of Sarah Rogers. Loki hung back a little to give his lover a little privacy. He watched and realised that he had never felt more content in his life. He began to think that maybe remaining on Earth for the rest of his life with this man would be a blessing rather than a punishment

Loki’s head suddenly began to spin. He had felt off for most of the day, but had ignored it rather than worry Steve. Now the feeling was getting stronger and he felt like he couldn’t stand. He reached out to grab hold of something, but simply grasped at thin air. He must have got a sound out, because as he fell, he heard Steve call his name and felt his hand on his face as his world went black.

Loki opened his eyes to find himself standing once more in the cave of the Norns. It was if he was there only yesterday and he wondered what was going on. As before the room lit up as the Norns arrived on their pedestal.

“Loki, why have you tarried in your task? You spend your days concerned with the trivial mortals.” They said in unison.

“What else was I meant to do? You gave Odin clear instructions, but me, you dumped on Earth with no idea what I needed to do. I have done everything I could and I have saved lives. What more is there?” Loki vented a little of his frustration.

“You had the powers to make important changes that would benefit all. Very well, we shall set you a task. There is one, a threat to all. Remove him. By doing this, you will prevent a chain of events that would bring great harm to the realm. Succeed and you will have earned your redemption.”

Loki knew he should be happy that he finally had a direction, but he felt very uneasy. It seemed so simple. Kill a man, become everything he was again. Something wasn't right.

“Who is this man? What are his crimes? I will not kill unless I know why.” Loki asked.

The Norns faces were as unreadable as ever but Loki noted that there was a pause before they answered “Who he is, is unimportant. His crimes are numerous for a mortal and he will bring harm to those around, especially your beloved. All you need know is that you shall meet him soon and will know him when you do.”

Loki still wasn't sure about the Norns, but if the man he was meant to kill intended harm to Steve then his decision was already made.

The Norns hadn't finished. “You are not to speak of this to your new companions. Better that it appears as a task born of necessity rather than planning. Mortals lack conviction to do what must be done.”

With that, the cave vanished from Loki sight.

Loki opened his eyes and was staring once more at the ceiling in the Medbay. He could feel the familiar pressure on his hand and turned to see Steve sitting on a chair, his head resting on the bed next to him fast asleep. He ran his other hand over his lover's head. Steve woke at the touch.

“Hey.” Steve said, the worry written all over his face. “You have to stop ending up here. I really don't know how much more my nerves can take.”

Loki smiled to himself. “Forgive me, my sweet. How long have I been unconscious?”

“12 hours. Helen couldn't tell us why, you just collapsed. Is everything ok?” Steve looked really concerned.

Loki said nothing for a moment remembering what the Norns had told him. “I am well as far as I know.”

Steve raised an eyebrow. He knew Loki pretty well and could tell that he was hiding something. Loki hadn't hidden anything from him in a very long time, he was sure he knew the former God better than his own brother did and Steve was worried, but didn't push it for now. He was sure that if it was important, Loki would tell him when he was ready.

Nothing happened for 3 weeks and everything with Steve and Loki seemed normal on the surface, but Steve could tell that Loki was tense, as if he was waiting for something to happen. Still he didn't talk to Steve about what was going on, in fact he was drifting away from him slowly and Steve didn't know what to do.

After all it wasn't like Loki really loved him. They had been together for 6 months and while Steve told Loki of his feelings often, Loki had never returned them once and Steve figured that if he hadn't told him by now then it was more than possible that he would never love him. He knew that Loki cared for him but that didn't always mean the same as love. He was starting to question if he could stay in a one sided relationship.

Then the report that a man with a metal arm had been spotted in Manhattan landed on his desk. He had broken up a fight between two rival gangs, only to turn on all of them and put most of them in the hospital, all the while demanding that they tell him where Steve was. The Police had tried to apprehend him which had resulted in more casualties.

Steve read the reports and practically ran to look for Natasha. He found her in the mess with Loki. "There's a lead on Bucky, he's in Manhattan and it looks like he's still in 1940. We got to get after him now before he vanishes again. Grab Sam and meet me at the jet."

As Natasha headed off to find Falcon, Loki followed surprised that Steve hadn't asked him to help "Do want me to come with you, Steve?"

Steve looked at Loki a little unsure. This wasn't an Avenger's mission, it was personal and while you would think that would make including his lover a given, it didn't. Steve was still feeling uneasy over why Loki was hiding something from him. On the other hand, Loki was an extra pair of eyes and his magic would be something Bucky wouldn't expect. So he nodded and the pair headed to the hanger.

Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

Loki finds his target and faces an impossible choice.

Bucky had indeed gone to ground by the time they arrived, but Steve was certain he would stay close especially if he was looking for Steve. The only thing that surprised him was that he hadn't gone to Brooklyn, but then he had no idea what tricks his broken mind could be playing on him.

Steve squared up to give orders. "Right, the reports say he was looking for me so I'm going to head to the site of the gang fight. Sam, Natasha start checking side streets and back allies, he not going to stay in the open any longer then he needs to. Loki, is there any way you could use your magic to get an idea of where he is?"

Loki thought for a moment. "I have never felt his presence before so I have no means to pick him out from the others around as I can with you or the other Avengers. However, if his mind is as damaged as you say, his energy could be chaotic."

"Ok, spread out. You spot him, do not approach, call me. This going be hard enough without getting him more confused."

Loki took a moment to focus before opening his mind a little. It stuck him that he had never even seen image of Bucky. It had been one of the few subjects that Steve had kept close to his chest. He had told Loki everything that had happened in 1944 but as he still blamed himself for Bucky's fall from the train and for all the things that had happened to his friend afterwards, he didn't like to talk about it too much. Loki guessed it was something he would only begin to forgive himself for once Bucky was found and on the mend.

So Loki's only defining feature to look for was his artificial arm. He hoped it would be enough as his found the amount of chaotic energy on the streets of New York was too much and he closed his mind again quickly. Not before however he caught a single word. "STEVE"

He turned quickly and saw a man a little shorter then himself with shoulder length dark hair, and piercing brown eyes, the eyes of a killer. Loki couldn't see the metal arm as it was covered by a long sleeved coat, but he didn't need to. He knew it was Bucky, the man he was meant to kill.

Bucky may not have known who he was, but Loki was sure that the man had realised he was found. Bucky turned and bolted down the alley behind him. Loki only had time to shout Steve's name through his communicator before he started running after him. Loki knew that Bucky had undergone at least some of the enhancements that Steve had but he had never imagined that he would be that quick. It was taking all of Loki's speed to maintain the distance, forget closing the gap.

Loki had only one option if he ever hoped to catch him. Loki tried to use his magic to push Bucky forward to try and make him lose his balance, but he used greater force then he intended and sent Bucky hurtling into a wall. He still wasn't moving when Loki reached him.

Loki looked down at the still figure and didn't know what to do. He lost his communicator somewhere during the chase and so he had no way of knowing where Steve was or how long he had. This was his chance to end his sentence, to go home, but to do that he must hurt the man he loved. Because he did, he loved Steve with everything he had.

To make matters worse, Loki knew Bucky didn't deserve this fate. He had been used, a pawn for whoever held the power. First the Russians, then Hydra. He hadn't made a single choice for himself until the fall of SHIELD and by the looks of it, the first thing he had done when he was finally able, was go looking for Steve. He needed to find another way out of this.

Loki tentatively knelt down next to the unconscious man. He reached out his hand to touch his head and slowly entered his mind. This was a branch of magic he didn't like, but knew enough about so as not to do anymore harm. What he found was a mess. It was a maze of memories all mixed together, blended one into another. There was no order, no way for Bucky to form any sense of self, to find the man he was. There was no way Loki could fix the damage that had been done and there would be some memories he may never recover, but maybe he could allow Bucky to focus his mind. If he could remember what he already had the way they should be, there would be a better chance for new memories to resurface and be arranged correctly by his own mind. So Loki started to tweak at the memories. It was like pulling delicate threads, moving things around. He used what he knew from Steve to arrange things better.

Loki saw glimpses of Steve as a young man, small and skinny but with a big heart and bright spirit. He felt the surprise that Bucky felt the first time he saw Steve after the Serum. There was the pain as he fell from the train, as he was experimented on during his captivity and how they wiped his mind clean after a kill. Then there were the most recent memories. Steve under the bridge, Steve on the Helicarrier, Steve falling in to the river. The conflict he went through was unbelievable whether to kill Steve or save him. Finally, there was the loneliness, the fear of what he had done.

Loki strained hard to keep his own sense of self, the power of the emotions Bucky was feeling was almost overwhelming, but slowly it all fell into place. Loki was amazed at the strength of mind Bucky must have, not to have simply broken under the weight of the jumbled memories. He also seemed to remember far more than Loki had thought once it all settled in to place. His job done, he slowly withdrew. The rest was up to Bucky now.

Loki had just pulled his fingers away when he felt a hand grab his shoulder. Steve was standing over him and he didn't look happy.

"Loki, what are you doing? I told you not to engage." Steve said sternly, his eyes focused on Bucky. The man was just beginning to stir.

Loki knew that Steve was concerned for Bucky and so ignored the hand that still held him. "If I hadn't, he would have slipped away again and we may never have found him."

Loki felt the hand relax. He put his own hand over the top. "Steve, we must talk. There is something I need to tell you."

"Steve" Bucky's voice was a little weak but it was clear. "Steve, what's going on?"

Steve let go of Loki's shoulder and grabbed Bucky's real arm to help him into a seated position. "It's ok, Buck. We're here."

Loki stilled at the last statement. Steve had said we, but there was every chance that soon he would

leave his lover behind and that was the real reason why he hadn't spoken of his feelings, he hadn't wanted to burden Steve with the truth. If he thought Loki was indifferent, then hopefully he would recover from his own feelings easier. Loki wasn't sure if he would ever recover from his.

Steve had carried on talking. "What do you remember? Do you know where you are?"

"I thought I was in Brooklyn. I was looking for you, to stop you getting beaten up again, but that was years ago. It's like someone has spring cleaned my head." Bucky said, his eyes snapping up to meet Loki's.

Loki nodded. "I was able to help order your memories. They are not perfect as I know only what Steve has told me of your life, but your own mind should be able to handle the rest now."

Steve looked up at Loki, his eyes full of gratitude and love, but before anyone could say anything else, they were surrounded by a bright light and vanished.

Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

Loki faces the Norns one last time

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Loki recognised that he was once more in the cave of the Norns, he hoped for the last time. This, he had expected. What he hadn't expected was that Steve and Bucky would be here with him. This gave him a very uncomfortable feeling.

Steve came to Loki's side and took his hand. "Loki, where are we?"

"We are in the caves of the Norns. This is where they passed judgement on me." Loki answered, a little on edge as he was unsure that to expect.

"Ok, I think I need a few pointers here. Where exactly are we, who are these Norns, why are you two holding hands and who the hell are you anyway?" Bucky blurted out, the last question aimed specifically at Loki.

Loki and Steve eyes met. This was not the best introduction to Steve's oldest friend and he wasn't sure if he would have time to explain it all properly anyway.

Steve decided to start. "Buck, do you remember those stories we were told about the Norse gods. Meet Loki, the God of Mischief."

Bucky nearly dropped to floor in shock. "You are kidding me."

"No, I am Loki of Asgard, my brother is Thor, god of Thunder who is the son of Odin the Allfather. All stories have some truth in them and here I am." And prove his point, Loki lit a small fire in the palm of his hand. "As to you other questions, the Norns are the fates that watch over those who live in the nine realms, we are standing in the cave where they seem to meet and as for this?"

Loki lift the hand which held Steve's unsure of what to say. Steve continued "We been together for the last 6 months. Don't even say it, I'm not queer, which is practically celebrated now by the way. I just love Loki."

Bucky had information overload so focused on the thing that he could understand. Unfortunately, (or fortunately, Bucky wasn't sure) the Norns decided to make their entrance.

Loki turned to the pedestal, but was shocked at what he saw. It was the same three beautiful women, but now they glowed red not white. There was also a hardness in their faces that wasn't there before and their hands, which once sported long elegant fingers, now looked like talons. Loki knew that this wasn't going to end well.

"Steve, get back and please believe me when I say I didn't know it was Bucky." Loki knew in that moment that he had been wrong, that Steve deserved to know the truth. He kissed his lover then

whispered “I love you. I have always loved you.”

Steve’s eyes widened and tried to keep hold of Loki’s hand, but Bucky could tell by the feeling in the room that something was very wrong and pulled Steve away, holding him by his arm.

Loki advanced to the Norns, his head high. He knew that whatever happened now he had failed in the task that had been set him and he was glad. Now it was time for the consequences of his actions.

“Loki Laufeyson, you were charged with putting an end to the life that stands behind you. It was not for you to chance the fate decided for him.” The Norns voices had always gentle before, now they were hard and Loki could almost hear the touch of anger.

“I know the will of the Norns is not absolute. Your words were to remove the threat, this I have done. I see now why you did not tell me who it was. I said I would not kill unless I knew why and the truth was not a good enough reason. He had no control over his actions, now he does. He wasn’t a danger before and certainly isn’t now.” Loki knew that his arguments would be falling on deaf ears. Whatever his fate, it was already decided.

“You were given a task. Now you have a choice. You wished your immortal life restored, therefore a life we require in return. Which will you give us? The life of the mortal you were meant to take or the life of your beloved.” The Norns if it was possible glowed brighter and more menacing than before.

Loki kept looking straight ahead. He knew Steve would be trying to reach him so put a shield up between himself and the other two. “Neither. Return me Earth, I shall remain as I am. Take my powers if you must. I give them to you willingly.”

“That choice was forfeit when you went against us. Choose or we shall.”

Loki did turn around this time and met Steve’s eyes. Steve was pushing hard against the shield to reach him, ignoring the shocks it was giving him. Loki smiled sadly, then turned his attention to Bucky. He was standing very still, watching everything. Loki met the other man’s eyes and said “Look after him”

Bucky nodded, understanding enough to guess what was coming.

Loki turned back to the Norns. “I choose. You want a life, take mine. You say I have a destiny, well unless you wish it to be spending every second of the life you give me finding a way to destroy you, I would end it now. You touch these men and I shall find a way to wipe you from the cosmos, that I swear.”

Loki had ensured that he and the Norns couldn’t hear Steve or Bucky from the other side of the shield, while they could hear everything that was being said on his side. Still, he knew without hearing that Steve would be begging Loki not to do it, offering his own life instead, but Loki was determined that that wasn’t going to happen. It was his choice and his fate. He just hoped that the Norns would be merciful and not actually kill him. He wanted to live and be with Steve for the rest of his days.

The Norns snarled. They knew it wasn’t an empty threat, that there were ways to harm even them and Loki would find one if he could. Still the Norns were as vengeful as every other being in the universe. Loki felt the pull as if something was being ripped from his chest. It wasn’t painful as the darkness overtook him, but it felt like the end.

Steve screamed as Loki's body fell to the floor. The shield disappeared and Steve bolted forward, scooping Loki's lifeless form into his arms. The tears were streaming down his face and he rocked the dead man close to his chest. The Norns faded from sight, their work done, but not before their last act of cruelty. They snatched Loki's body from Steve before sending him and Bucky back to Earth, leaving him alone on the cold, hard floor.

Chapter End Notes

You know how much I love a cliffy

Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

Steve is a broken man

Steve and Bucky reappeared in the middle of the conference room table. Natasha and the rest of the Avengers (minus Thor, he had been summoned back to Asgard by Heimdall) were in the middle of frantic search and rescue plans believing that their leader and teammate had somehow been captured by the Winter Solider.

Steve was still for a moment before the tears started falling again and he crumpled in on himself. Bucky got his arms around him, holding him tight and pulling him close. Everyone else in the room just stood there, mouths open wide at the sight. Steve's sobs were silent but Bucky could feel the force of each one. He looked to the rest of the Avengers.

"Help me."

Natasha recovered first. She jumped up on the table and tried to ease Steve from Bucky, but the super soldier pushed her away and simply clung to his friend even tighter.

"Barnes, what the hell is going on? Where's Loki?" Natasha fixed Bucky with a hard, dangerous stare which he sent right back.

"Loki is dead, right in front of Steve. Those fates or whatever killed him. He gave his life for us." Bucky said. At the mention of his lover's name, Steve buried his head deeper into Bucky's chest. "Look, we can't do anything like this. It's Black Widow, right. They gave me your file to read once. Can't you give him something to knock him out?"

Sam had already gone for a Doctor, who arrived minutes later with a syringe filled with the strongest sedative they had, one that was designed for Steve. Steve didn't put up a fight and was out of it in seconds. Bucky held the limp figure until a gurney arrived to take Steve to the Medbay. The sedative was still only experimental and the Doctors wanted Steve's vitals monitored until he came around again.

Bucky went to follow but his way was blocked by Natasha. "Not till we get answers, Barnes. What the hell went down?"

Bucky sighed. He hadn't the faintest idea what really happened. Less than an hour earlier he had been lost in his living dream, not sure what he was really doing or who he really was. Now he'd had some stranger in his head, sorting everything out, he found that at least some gods were real, that Steve fancied a guy and that the same guy had given up his own life rather than kill him. Couldn't these people see he was just as lost as the rest of them?

"Look, all I can tell you that for the past hour we've been in some cave somewhere, with some pissed off glowy women, who wanted Loki to kill me or Steve. He said no, told them to either kill him or he would kill them. They went for him. As the guy was Steve's boyfriend, he took it rather badly. Everything else that was said made no sense what so ever and I was hoping that someone could explain a few things when you've got a minute."

Natasha looked confused. “An hour? You’ve been gone for over a day. And I must say Barnes, you seem to be more coherent than I expected.”

“Apparently, Loki took a walk in my head and tidied up. Please don’t ask, I have no idea.”

Natasha was good at reading people and Bucky was telling them everything he knew, of that much she was certain. She hated being right. She had told Steve when this started that Loki would hurt him, she just never imagined that it would be like this. She wanted to cry for her lost teammate, but someone needed to lead the team and that wouldn’t be Steve for a long time.

Thor returned a few days later with grave news of his own. It would seem the Norns had finally taken action and Odin had simply vanished around the same time as Steve and Loki. Thor now had no choice but the return to Asgard and take his place as King. He had returned to take his leave of his brother and friends and to ask Jane to join him as his queen.

He entered the Headquarters to find it a very different place. The normal bustle was replaced by sombre silence. Everyone he met either refused to meet his eye or simply told them how sorry they were before hurrying away again. Thor couldn’t understand what was going on so went in search of Loki and Steve, fully expecting that they had been found and would be together in Steve’s office. Instead he found Natasha and a stranger with dark hair and a metal arm. Thor guessed this was Steve’s blood brother, Bucky.

“My friends, I have returned with news, but I feel that there is something more important afoot here. Where is the Captain and Loki? They are not still missing, are they?” Thor asked, straight to the point.

Natasha and the stranger looked upset which worried Thor greatly. “Thor, I been at Erik to find a way to contact Asgard, in fact I almost dragged Tony back here to help. I’m afraid it’s not good. It looks like the Norns pushed Loki the wrong way. They took him, Steve and Barnes to the Cave. Only Steve and Bucky came back. They killed him, Thor.”

“That is not possible. The Norns wanted to help Loki, they gave him the chance to redeem himself. There is a mistake, it is a trick of so kind.” Thor stammered. He would not believe it; Loki had died on him too many times for him to think that this time would be any different.

It was Bucky who spoke this time. “Hey, you don’t know me and I didn’t know him, but from where I was standing, these Norns didn’t seem that interested in helping, only using him to meet their needs which was for some reason involved getting me out of the picture for good. He made a different call, sorted out my head for me. They were pissed with him, trust me and there was no doubt, he’s dead.”

Thor sat down, unable to stand any longer. This would be third time he would mourn his brother and he wasn’t sure if he could cope with anymore. “Where is his body? I would take it back to Asgard for the funeral rights. It is his right as my brother.”

Bucky and Natasha looked at each other. “We don’t have it. The Norns snatched it out of Steve’s arms before they dumped us back here. We were just talking about a memorial service but we were waiting for Steve.”

Thor had forgotten the Captain, now he wondered how his brother’s lover was fairing. “Where is Steve? I would speak to him as we are as family.”

Natasha hung her head. “He’s refused to leave his room. We had to sedate him he got back here, now he won’t talk to anyone and will only let Bucky in to see him. He’s broken, Thor and I don’t know if he will ever come back to us.”

In his room, Steve led on the bed, curled up in a foetal position. He stared at the wall. He didn’t sleep, refusing to see anyone but Bucky, never saying a word. The only thing he could see was Loki’s lifeless eyes, the only thing he could hear was his final confession of love, his only real thought was finding a way to join him.

Chapter 25

Chapter Summary

Loki finds some answers

Chapter Notes

Ok this is where the Norse lore comes in. as i said before it is my take on it and isn't accurate.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Loki opened his eyes. He was standing in a lovely garden, it was evening and the stars were shining above his head brightly. The garden was lit by small lamps dotted around. Loki wondered where he was. Where ever it was, he sure he should know it somehow. The last thing he remembered was the cave and praying that the Norns would let Steve and Bucky return home. As he thought of Steve, his heart ached. He cursed over what his death would do to him, the man had lost so much already. He could only hope Bucky was recovered enough to support him.

He just began a debate with himself on what he should do when a woman appeared before him from nowhere. Loki was unsure how to describe her. Half her face was pale skinned with a brown eye and blond hair. The other half was dark skinned with a bright blue eye and dark hair. This was Hel Queen of Helheim and confirmation, if Loki needed any, that he was dead.

“You are welcome here Loki, if a little earlier than expected. You were never meant to fall in battle, so your place here has been waiting for you.” Hel said, her voice thin almost like water but with the strength of years.

“If I am honest, I am not pleased to be here so early myself, but I found my choices limited.” Loki replied. He looked about him. “I must say, Helheim is nicer then I imagined it would be.”

“Each sees what they wish to see. This place is significant to you.” Hel smiled a little.

Loki looked about him again and finally recognised Frigga's private garden. He had rarely seen it at night. His gaze returned to Hel's. A sudden thought struck him and made him laugh.

When she looked at him, the question in her eyes, he said “There are stories of Asgard on Midgard. They say how you are my daughter.”

“But I am, Father.”

Loki stopped laughing. “What do you mean?”

“It was the first time, long ago. I continue and this place remains unchanged by the renewal of the Nine Realms.” Hel said, the faint smile still lingering.

“I don't understand.” Loki was confused, “What renewal?”

“Ragnarok. The rebirth of the Worlds. The Realms of Yggdrasil will be reborn after a mighty battle, which you begin.” Hel answered in a very matter fact way.

“I....I” was all Loki could say. He wanted to say that he would never start a battle then remembered New York and remained silent.

“Father, have no fear. This has happened a hundred times before but this time, things were different. Laufey became greedy, he attacked Midgard and Asgard intervened. Odin won the war and did something unexpected. He took a child, you. You were meant to meet him much later and become his blood brother, betraying him and Asgard at every turn. Instead you were his son and he loved you as such. His lies betrayed your trust, your actions broke his heart, he hurt you in return. You drove each other to the edge of despair. The Norns felt the need to intervene.” Hel paused to let Loki process what he had heard.

“Why? What have they to do with any of this?” Loki too shocked to feel any emotion, but curiosity.

“They believe that it is their purpose to ensure that Ragnarok happens. So when you were sitting in your cell that last time, waiting for death, welcoming it, they did the only thing they could think of. They tried to control events so you would hate Odin enough and wish to begin the end. So they punished you both, you more harshly then him. They wanted you to grow resentful of your punishment, to rebel and attack Asgard. They did not count on the influence of Steve Rogers. The Mortal helped you, loved you, encouraged you to be content with the life you had with him. Not what the Norns wanted. So they tried to drive you apart.”

Loki considered his daughter’s words before nodded slowly. “He would never have forgiven me for killing Bucky, no matter how it happened. It may not have been that day, but soon he would have left me. Losing him would have driven me to attack to cause of my hurt, Odin.”

Hel nodded. “You must understand, the Norns look at Ragnarok as inevitable and sometimes their methods are cruel and in the end took your life out of spite.”

“That make no sense. Why kill me if they need me to bring about this Ragnarok? What would they have to gain? I can’t do anything from here.” Loki asked, a little perplexed.

“There is no scenario now where you would attack Asgard and begin the Final Great battle. Return you to earth with your beloved and your aims would no longer reach the stars. Kill either Steve Rogers or James Barnes and they would release on the universe a force of unimaginable power and with a single goal of wiping them from existence. They are not the most forgiven of beings and took your life in vengeance. All they see is the world’s renewal. That no longer matters. The worlds have changed now forever. You are here and Odin as well. The realms can continue rather than stagnate. The realms eternal no more.”

“What will they do now, if their goal is to bring about the end of the worlds?”

“They must find a new path. They will grow just as the rest of the Nine Realms will. Only time will tell.” Hel replied, her voice sounding far away and deep in thought.

“So, here I stay in my mother’s garden?” Loki asked, looking about him once more.

“Only if it is your wish. I have the power to send you back. It was asked of me once for Baldur, but I set a task which you ensured would fail.”

Loki thought about this for a moment. “Why would you do this for me? It is not as if I deserve this boon.”

“Father, you have lived a hundred lives, each leading towards to goal of starting the end of the world. I simply wish for you to live your last lifetime where your fate was in your own hands. There is however one issue. When you come to Helheim, you were a mortal. If I were to return you to the living, that is how you must return. I can’t give you what the Norns took. You will be mortal, you will have the same form, the same life span as your beloved, you will have your magic and you will have him. However, if you remain here, you will know peace and will be free from all your burdens and hurts”

“Will I remember being here?” Loki asked, not really wishing to.

“You will remember your choice and that I allowed you to return. The rest is a burden you do not need to live with.”

Loki smiled. “Then there is only one choice.”

Chapter End Notes

Merry Christmas everyone.

Please leave feedback but it is unlikely that I will reply until this evening

Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

Steve doesn't care if he lives or dies

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

After a shaky start, Bucky and Natasha reached easy working relationship. While Natasha was temporally in charge, she wasn't a natural leader and found herself relaying on Bucky for help, which he gave willingly. It hadn't taken the team long to realise why Steve valued Bucky not just as a friend but as a teammate and he was welcomed in to the Avengers with open arms. Few people knew that Bucky Barnes and the Winter Solider were the same person, so it would be unlikely that anybody would be coming after him. Dr Cho had offer to use the cradle to grow skin to cover his artificial arm, something he was considering.

Steve finally left his room 2 weeks after Loki's death. He returned however not as their leader, but a tool to be used and put away when not needed, at least that was what he wanted. Natasha, Sam and Bucky tried to get him to engage with the rest of them but nothing they said or did changed his mind. He trained and attended briefings and meetings but never gave input, he simply followed instruction. He was dead inside.

Steve did however drive himself impossibly hard during missions. He would throw himself at his adversaries, no longer possessing any sense of self preservation. It didn't take the team long to realise that he simply didn't want to live anymore but also wanted to go out fighting. Natasha's attempts to ground him failed when he simply arrived in the field off his own back or went off looking for trouble. At least if he went with the team, the others could keep an eye on him and help him when he got in too deep. Still, they all knew that it would only be a matter of time before he achieved his goal.

He came close 2 months after Loki's death and ended up back in the Medbay. It wasn't as bad as it could have been but he had a bad concussion. Bucky had sat with him for a while, but in the end he had to see Natasha and Steve would still allow no one else near him. So he was alone when he woke up. Or at least he should have been.

"I know you are awake, my sweet"

Steve still had his eyes closed, but brought up his hands to rub his face. This was it, he had finally gone mad. He should have known it would happen, that he would start hallucinating about Loki. He opened his eyes and looked at the face of his dead lover.

"Hey" was all he could say.

"I thought we agreed that you were to be more careful." Ghost Loki said, a slight smile on his lips.

This annoyed Steve a little. He was at least still alive. "It's not like you kept up your end of the

deal.”

Steve sat up and Loki took a step to the side to give him room. Steve was unsure of what to do. He was certain that if he went to touch his hallucination, it would feel completely real. If he told someone, they would try to treat him and he didn't want to lose the only thing he had left, even if his was insane. He decided to get a little distance. He pulled out his IV and standing, took a few steps away from the image of the other man.

“Is this it now, you're going to hang around me? Not that I mind that, a small piece of you is better than nothing at all. I just don't want to get use to you being here and then you vanish on me.” Steve said in a very matter of fact way.

Loki looked confused, which surprised Steve. “Steve, I am here for you, I have made my choice and I will never leave you.”

“Right, you think you're real. That's good and I'll believe anything you need me to as long as you stay. Thing is I can't talk to you when the others are around so please don't be offended. They'll try to make me better and I don't want that.” Steve said, trying not to cry. He needed to seem as normal as possible when someone comes back in.

Loki looked really worried now. “Steve, you don't seem to understand. I am real, I've come back. Hel gave me a second chance. You are unwell, please lie down and I will fetch someone.”

“No I'm fine. I know what's wrong and if they try to help, they will take you away from me.” Steve came closer but didn't try to touch Loki, frightened that if he did and his hand passed straight through him, he would breakdown completely.

Loki didn't know what to do. He wanted to take Steve in his arms but could tell that Steve didn't want that. He was saved by Bucky returning.

“Steve, you awake? Natasha.....oh my god. Loki, what the hell?”

Steve looked from Loki to Bucky and back, his mind a whirl of thoughts and emotions. “You can see him? He's really here?”

Bucky, who had been staring at Loki, waiting for an answer to the question he hadn't actually asked, suddenly snapped his eyes to Steve. “Of course he's here and I want to know where he's been for the last 2 months and what gives him the right to walk back in here after all the pain he's caused you?”

Loki turned to Bucky. “My friend, I died, my soul was sent to Helheim and I have returned by the grace of Hel, Queen of the Dead. It was not my intent to cause my love pain but it was a choice between you or me and you did not deserve that fate.” Loki turned back to Steve. “I am sorry you suffered on my account, I never wanted to see you hurt, but there was no other way.”

Steve had been staring the whole time. Now he closed the remaining distance between them, pulled Loki into his arms and kissed him. Loki tightened his arms around Steve, trying to get as close as he could. They pulled apart for a brief moment.

“You're staying with me; you're not going back to Asgard?” Steve asked, still not really believing it was true.

“I am staying and I am still mortal. I will live and die with you.” Loki replied. “It was what I wanted, to be with you. I love you.”

Steve sighed, letting all the pain of the last few weeks' slip away. He kissed Loki again, who welcomed it.

Bucky on the other hand made a rapid retreat. While he was happy that Steve had found someone, he knew it would take time for him to be comfortable seeing him behaving that way with another man. He headed off to tell the rest of the team of the return of their lost teammate and maybe, just maybe it would put Natasha in a good enough mood to let him take her out to dinner.

Chapter End Notes

This is the end of another story and the happy ending I promised. I am sorry for the angst but I hope you have all enjoyed it and thank you for reading.

End Notes

Feedback Always Welcome.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!